


HOMESTUCK
ENTERTAINMENT
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PUMPKIN PARTY ZINE!



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Spooky Time Title

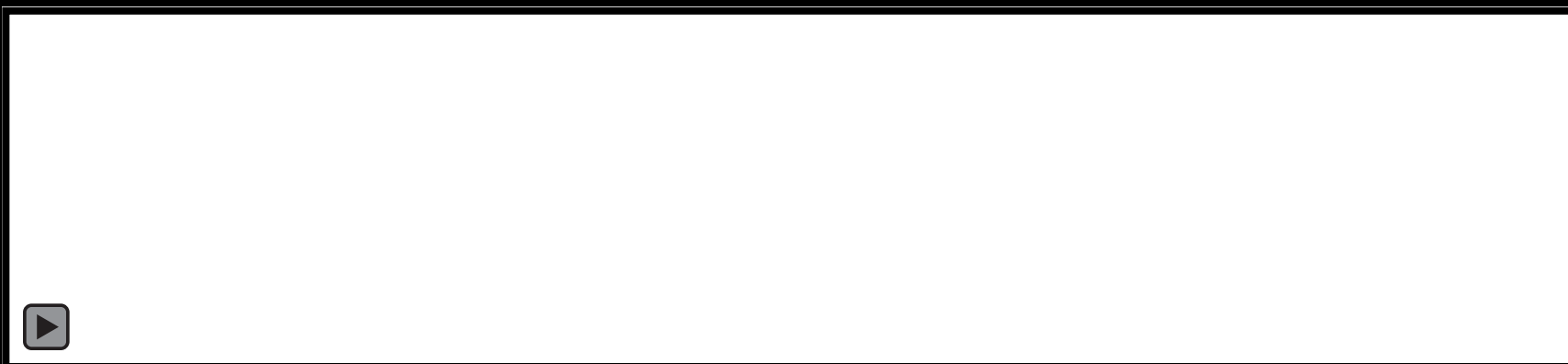
Art: Cro

@YoItsCro (Twitter)

Layout: Jonaya

@AltUniverseWash

(Twitter)



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Karkat: Angrily Play a Haunting Organ Refrain
Jojo (Funk McLovin)
@FunkMcLovin (Twitter)

Homestuck Halloween Special
Eeva
@eevaningtea (Twitter)



Halloween

🎃 A Time For 🎃



Candy



Pumpkins

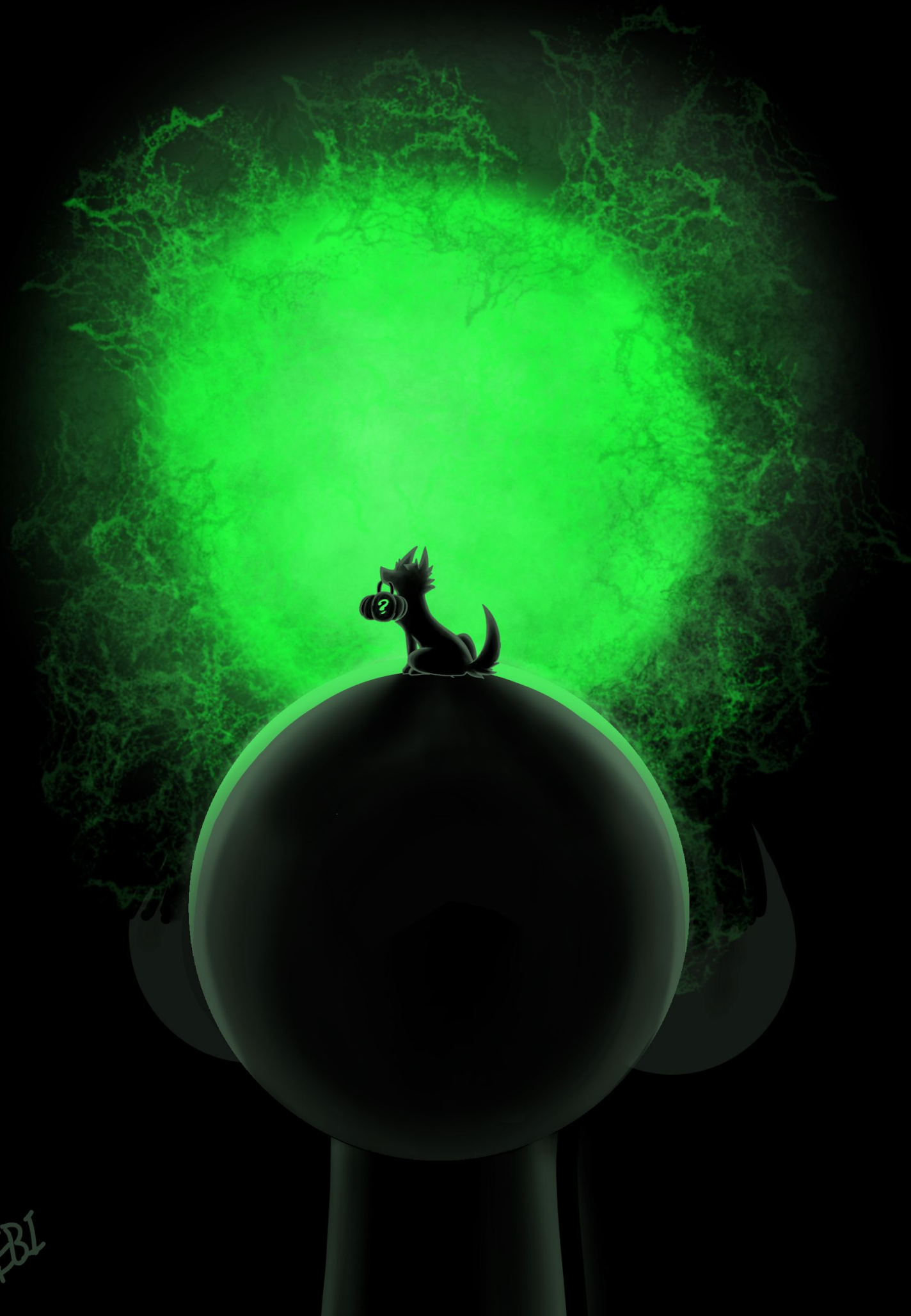


Costumes



And Fun





Awoo

mebi

@MEBI96862134 (Twitter)

MEBI



Untitled

Frankenflora

@FrankenFlora (Twitter/tumblr), @frankenflora_ (Instagram)



A Hollow Welcoming

Emily

@FishyDizz (Twitter)



AraJuice

Kansas

@Kansastuck (Twitter)



Jade Harley: Armed and Dangerous
Jonaya Riley
@AltUniverseWash (Twitter/Ao3)



Summoning of the School Ghost Girl

Gaily

@gailytine (tumblr)



Earth C Candy Haul
Grimnostic
@Grimnostic (Twitter)



Engage Trickster Mode

Evan

@shadowdustcosplay (Twitter)



Beta Kids WoD Vampires
CassandraOOC
@cassandraOOC (tumblr)



Grimdark Trick or Treat
Scone
@scone_dango (Twitter)



Grimdark Tav
SmallTrapInch
@smalltrapinch (twitter/instagram)



Halloween Intrusion

Noxeorn

@Noxeorn (Twitter)



Hands and Roses

Rox

@chezforshire (Twitter)



The
HEIR

Heir of the Horrorterrors
Felix
@4reekie (Twitter)



Kids' Seance

Toadbait

@toadbait (Twitter/Instagram)



@astrumUmbræ

Untitled Rosemary
astrumUmbræ
@astrumUmbræ (tumblr/Twitter/insta)

jade and
aradia go

GHOST HUNTING

Jade and Aradia Go Ghost Hunting

Breezv

@bree_zv (Twitter), @breezv (tumblr)

breezv

jade and aradia go ghost hunting
by breezv

After a long pause, Aradia Megido turns off the noisy spirit box to no avail. Not a peep from anyone or anything that may have been noncorporeal. Rats. No, literally, there's nothing but rats to be found in this old, abandoned cabin in the woodsy part of her neighborhood. She lets out a sharp, disappointed sigh, and packs her things, flashlight handed to her companion and fellow ghost-hunter, Jade Harley.

JADE: hey dont be so down!!!

JADE: ghost, no ghost, it was still a good adventure to get out here!

Aradia looks up at her and raises an eyebrow,

JADE: okay yeah it kinda stinks down here <:)

ARADIA: sigh...

Jade gives a consoling wrap of an arm around Aradia, her warmth radiating in that moment. Aradia leans her head in and pouts angrily. After a moment she shakes her head and grabs her bag. Zipping up the rest of her equipment, Aradia nods affirmingly for the two of them to get out of this stink hole.

ARADIA: i have been real out of my game lately

JADE: hmm??

Jade adjusts the bucket hat she has on and catches up, fiddling her fingers through the backpack's straps. They walk leisurely on the way back to Aradia's house.

JADE: well maybe its not you

JADE: maybe all the ghosts are busy!

Aradia laughs,

ARADIA: yeah?

ARADIA: are they preoccupied with some kind of ghost party up there that i am unaware of?

JADE: probably!!!

JADE: theyve probably been having that party for a real long time!

JADE: in a place called the afterlife

JADE: and not on our corporeal earth :)

ARADIA: ò_ó

Aradia frowns, visibly, and Jade simply laughs it off. Here we go again. Jade never believed in these kinds of things, but she always comes along and helps Aradia anyway. She says she **wants to make sure you stay safe out there.**

ARADIA: i have caught ghosts you know

ARADIA: on video and recording

JADE: your blurry night vision videos and evp stuffs arent really much to go off of...

ARADIA: it is proof of something isnt it?

ARADIA: the supernatural is right under our noses and we take so much of it for granted but so too have the spirits been overstaying their welcome

ARADIA: i just... have not been the best at getting a hold of them as of late

ARADIA: it has been a few weeks but i am sure that if there is a spirit to whisk away to the other side we will be duly notified of its presence

ARADIA: though it is a bit weird that there have been little instances of reported sightings within our town this past month

JADE: heh and why do you think that is?

ARADIA: hmmm...

Jade asks with a smirk as Aradia looks down and ponders as they walk. Could it be that there really are no spirits left in this town to help guide into the other side? The beaten dirt changes to concrete as they walk on the path to their street. But maybe it would be better to look up. She sees the stars, analyzing them, looking at them for answers, connecting the pinholes they make in the dark sky. Further up, she sees the waxing gibbous upon her. Her eyes light up, and smacks a fist to her palm.

ARADIA: the moon!!!

JADE: the m-moon...?

ARADIA: its all so clear!

ARADIA: it is said that supernatural activity is at its peak during the full moon right?

Jade sneers a bit, looking off to the side, a bit skeeved,

JADE: sure...?

ARADIA: well maaaaybe...

ARADIA: this is like

ARADIA: the calm before the storm!

JADE: huh?

ARADIA: it is the waxing gibbous! we must be a day away from a full moon right now!

JADE: !!!

ARADIA: all i have to do is try to time my ghost hunting expeditions to the full moon and i could be getting electromagnetic frequencies off the charts!

ARADIA: in fact this would be way off the charts!

ARADIA: these charts are from another dimension in the reaches of paradox space!

Jade's shoulders stiffen as Aradia rambles on about her plan of action. Her palms begin to sweat, but she pats it down on her jean skirt. Her jirt? They eventually reach Aradia's front porch and despite it being 1 AM, the television is still on, its light peeking through the blinds.

ARADIA: i will have to have my best gear prepared for who knows what sort of weary spirit floats our way

ARADIA: we will talk about this tomorrow right jade?

Jade looks up at the sky, a glazed expression over her round glasses, but snaps out of it after a few calls of her name.

JADE: oh right yeah of course

JADE: actually uh we can talk about it right now!

ARADIA: oh?

JADE: yeah haha i cant go

ARADIA: oh...

Jade scratches her head mindlessly and puts on an apologetic smile,

JADE: yeah i have like uuuuuuhhh

JADE: a thing with uuuuuuhhhh

JADE: dave

ARADIA: dave strider?

JADE: yeap :D

ARADIA: the boy who is unable to spend even five seconds away from his boyfriend?

JADE: yup

ARADIA: around this exact time of night?

JADE: yyyyyyyeah

JADE: its a uh roleplay session! you know how deep in character i have to be during these things hehe

JADE: oh how the full moon just inspires me!

ARADIA: i suppose that makes sense...

Aradia looks to the side, a bit upset to hear that she can't have Jade with her for that night. Not that she needs Jade at all for these missions. This is for the sake of saving ghosts after all! But having Jade there... just made her feel safe. A warm, comforting presence in the cool night air. She's disappointed, but smiles anyway.

ARADIA: yeah alright

ARADIA: you guys have fun then! please do update me on how your and daves characters tackle your next endeavor

Oh, that smile. Jade would level mountains and more just to see her smile, but not for that night. She will be quite busy. She hands Aradia the backpack for her ghost hunting equipment.

JADE: thanks <:)

JADE: im sure serena the cat will have a few stern words for snoop the dog during our session!

Aradia grabs her keys to unlock the door. She turns back to look at Jade, who is standing a ways away, and gives a little wave.

ARADIA: bye...!

Jade throws her a double pistols and a wink. Aradia turns the knob of the door, swinging it open when suddenly Jade blurts out,

JADE: wait!

Aradia turns, her eyes glimmering hopefully.

ARADIA: yes?

JADE: just... be safe out there tomorrow, okay?

Her eyebrows droop but she smiles politely anyway. She was hoping for something different.

ARADIA: you know i will <:)

Aradia enters, and looks to the living room. The television was left on, and someone's drooling on the couch again. She sighs and turns off the TV.

ARADIA: hey! get up to your room

SOLLUX: fiive more miinute2 dad...

She rolls her eyes, and walks upstairs. Just before the last step, her phone blips from a text message.

GG: sweet dreams! <3

Her heart flutters as she smiles sweetly,

AA: you too! <3

Night vision camera? Check. Spirit box? Check. Flashlights? Check. EMF meter? Check. First aid kit? Always!

Aradia was doing some last minute assurances before the plan at hand. Helping guide ghosts into the afterlife ain't much, but it's honest work. Actually, scratch that, it's often very much work, and sometimes you aren't even able to tell if it's fruitful. So she wants to aim a bit higher to encourage the spirits to contact her; she was going to go inside the abandoned cabin, but that implies going deeper into the woods. Searching the backyard, scouring the perimeter. To go into the woods was highly discouraged because of **bears and wolves or some silly stuff like that**, as she puts it nonchalantly towards her housemates.

TAVROS: BUT ISN'T THAT LIKE,,, AN ACTUAL, REAL, LIFE-THREATENING SITUATION TO CONSIDER?

SOLLUX: liike aa ever cared about liife or death lol.

Sollux takes a sip from his unironic can of Mountain Dew, eyes focused directly on the video game on the television.

ARADIA: ill be fine

ARADIA: that is if the ghosts dont get me first! hahahaha!

She puts on a spooky laugh to scare Tavros. He holds his face as he groans worriedly in his wheelchair.

TAVROS: oH, gOSH DARN IT, i'LL GO WITH YOU!!!

SOLLUX: you wiill?

ARADIA: you will?

TAVROS: nO,,, }:(

ARADIA: ah well

TAVROS: sORRY,, sOLLUX, cAN'T YOU GO WITH HER?

SOLLUX: dude, ii am liike the lea2t qualiified per2on two go iintwo any dark 2cary place2.

SOLLUX: ii have the viim and viigor of a door 2topper.

TAVROS: ONE COULD SAY THAT A LAX DEMEANOR IS THE BEST POSSIBLE KIND WHEN CONFRONTING UH,, sPECTERLY BEINGS,,,

SOLLUX: 2o ii2 the 2ame when confrontiing bear2.

SOLLUX: be2ides, iim 2ure 2he can handle her2elf, right aa?

Aradia was going through her notes, already ignoring the two, double-checking everything until she was satisfied.

ARADIA: alright

ARADIA: im going in!

SOLLUX: you 2ure jade cant come wiith?

She pauses for a moment,

ARADIA: no... i believe if it was an unimportant event she would be with me right now

Sollux shrugs,

SOLLUX: iif you 2ay 2o.

TAVROS: i MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO SLEEP WELL TONIGHT BUT,,

TAVROS: gOOD LUCK OUT THERE,, ,!

ARADIA: if im not back within two hours...

She heaves the backpack and turns back with a smile,

ARADIA: call the police! :D

—

The flashlight peers through the thicket of the trees as Aradia walks through it. Small branches and leaves crunch under her boots as she walks towards the path to the old abandoned cabin. She reaches the entrance and walks past the dilapidated old fence, covered with overgrown grass and weeds. The night air chills down her spine.

She walks up to the door and the wooden porch creaks beneath her weight. The cabin seems to sway ever so slightly, like you wouldn't be able to tell if you weren't alone. Aradia grabs onto the door knob, and it's ice cold and rusted. She takes a deep breath and opens the

door as it creaks eerily, a bit of moonlight shining into the shoddy living room. Just then, a howl from miles away is heard right on cue.

ARADIA: a bit too on the nose if i do say so myself

Aradia slides the backpack strap from one shoulder to the other, moving the pack side to her front. Opening up the zipper, she pulls out a small device. It's an electromagnetic field scanner. **iit2 an expen2iive a22 gho2t and or miicrowave detector** as Sollux so bluntly put it. Now or never, she supposes.

ARADIA: are there any ghosts out here that want to make their presence known during this lovely full moon season?

Silence. Nothing but the low moans of an old, creaky cabin swaying in the windy night. She walks a few steps deeper, making sure to scan everything with her EMF. The walls are lined with random graffiti, and the furniture is ruined beyond repair. This cabin used to be a place campers and travellers would rent while on the road. Living in the middle of practically nowhere leaves one with the remains of some weird oddities. Weird in a good way. Ghosts have been sighted around these woods and this cabin specifically, one in particular scared a group of rascals planning to trash the place (even moreso) for fun.

Deeper in the house she goes and not a peep from her little device. Aradia sighs and rummages through her backpack again to pick up a hefty radio-looking gadget.

ARADIA: if any spirits need my help in order to gain safe passage into the afterlife i will gladly volunteer

ARADIA: this box will let you speak to me just please come closer

With the click of a switch the device blasts random static and radio gibberish, switching rapidly and loudly with no rhyme or reason. It's a spirit box and, as Tavros so succinctly put it, **iT PICKS UP WHAT THE GHOSTS ARE THROWIN' DOWN**, So they can make some sort of attempt at communicating.

Nothing. Rats. No, not again, the rats! Turning off the spirit box, Aradia hears scuttling above the ceiling and tries to step away in case it actually cracks down.

Skitter, skitter, skitter, THUMP! She whispers to herself under her breath,

ARADIA: ok that was for sure a thump

ARADIA: rats dont thump do they

Okay, forget the spirit box. She zips everything back in, and out comes the night vision camera. With a flashlight in hand, she finds her way walking up the stairs, each step echoing

and creaking loudly through the halls. Aradia reaches the top of the stairs, and the skittering stops. For a moment, the entire cabin was in complete silence. Nervously, she calls out,

ARADIA: im here to help... do not be afraid

The silence was worse than the creaking. The top of the stairs was not very roomy, only a few square feet of space for allowance to the attic ladder, and a closet at the end of the short hall. She tilts the camera and flashlight up to the attic door, its string dangling, swaying.

Wait. Why was it swaying? What could have moved it? The wind? But she would have felt it from up there. Aradia takes a step back,

ARADIA: who... AH!

But miscalculates and misses a step on the stairs. Screaming, she loses her balance and her camera flies up, but something-- someone, grabs her arm. For a moment of relief, she stops screaming, but starts back up again when she realizes she's being held at the arm by an icy cold hand. In a frenzied panic, she lets go, lands on her behind, and grabs the camera to run as fast as she could out of the cabin immediately. She doesn't stop to look back, and almost trips at her own feet.

After running a dozen or so feet away from the cabin, Aradia quickly and frustratedly tries to turn on the camera.

ARADIA: cmon... fuck! what was...

The camera takes its sweet, sweet time and Aradia keeps her guard up, looking back and forth between the cabin and the camera. For a moment, there's barely a sound, and the next, two yellow eyes peer directly at her from the front door.

ARADIA: SHIT!

Aradia scrambles up to run left towards the direction of the path back home. Or was it right? No, it was the other way, she was so sure. Putting the backpack on correctly now, she grabs onto the straps and runs like her life depends on it. Looking up at the sky, the leaves almost consume the night, but the moonlight is still peeking through. Looking back as she runs, she feels as though she's far away enough to stop and stay low and hidden within the shade. Catching her breath, she slumps over a tree to fiddle with the camera once more.

It's finally turned on and she scans through the footage with intense ferocity. The video feed is clear, but it seems the lens cracked as soon as she dropped it. She rewinds, scanning frame by frame. Next, next, next... there. A glimpse of something that was certainly not human, and certainly no ghost. The footage is blurry, but it looks as though its pupils were too small, and had long slender ears. If she had to guess, she would think it was a--

???: Hello

ARADIA: VAMPIRE?!

???: I Apologize For Startling You

Wearing a long black cape, the figure leaned in low, and was intimidatingly tall, attempting to be at eye level with her. Their eyes were glowing that same bright yellow.

ARADIA: who are you?

???: Ah So You Are Not My Expected Guest

???: You Really Would Think I Would Come Around To Realizing That Sooner

???: Given That You Just Ran Away From Me Screaming

Aradia gives a polite chuckle, nervously unsure what she should be doing in this situation. She certainly wasn't able to outrun this creature. She can only hope that they're friendly.

ARADIA: youre a uuuhhhh

???: A Vampire Yes

???: Where Are My Manners

???: My Name Is K--

Within a flash, a large creature leaps to tackle the vampire onto the ground. It growls with malicious intent and unhinges its jaw to presumably take a bite from the vampire. She's able to stop it with immense force, holding the maw back with her bare hands. She hisses as she tucks her legs in and kicks the creature in the guts, hopping up to take on stable footing. The creature grunts as it gets back up, its back turned to Aradia. They have a wolf's head, but a seemingly humanoid body with white fur covering them. In a growling voice they muster out,

???: get the fuck off my turf!!!!!!

ARADIA: were... wolf...

Aradia's shaky composition mutters out a few words before her jello legs are able to stand her up. The wolf looks back at her, and gives a knowing glance before turning back to growl and bark at the vampire. The vampire hisses back and bares her fangs and claws as her eyes glow brighter.

In a split second, the vampire jumps up in the air and lands their pointed boot squarely on the wolf's jaw. Wow, vampires have a pretty cool fashion sense.

Aradia yelps and so does the wolf as it pummels head-first into the ground, but still going strong. They grab the vampire by the leg with both arms and slam them against a tree trunk with ease. She grunts but gets back up as if it was nothing. The wolf eases up and charges at her on

all fours. With a flourish in her step, the vampire moves aside and lets the wolf pass, grabbing their tail and slamming them back down in the dirt. Whimpering, they curl up and howl in pain quite literally as the vampire catches her breath.

She walks up to the wolf, holding them down on the neck with one hand, and opens her jaw for a bite. Aradia shuts her eyes tight, unable to bear the sight any longer. Just then, the wolf sucker punches the vampire right in the jaw. She unhands the wolf's neck and they take this as an opportunity to bite down on her arm. Blood drips down onto the wolf's white fur as she hisses in pain. The vampire scratches back with her claws and the wolf lets go of her arm. In a flash, the vampire jumps back and runs away into the woods.

ARADIA: holy shit

The wolf coughs as it curls up into fetal position on the dirt ground, back facing Aradia as she kneels cautiously next to them. They wheeze as their fur sheds and their body shrinks in size, groaning in pain. Their hair is mangled and messy in a familiar way, but with two white ears poking out of their head, and a tail wagging softly to boot. Aradia takes a moment to assess the familiar figure.

ARADIA: jade?!

The wolf holds up their hand weakly into a peace sign, then drops its dead weight on the ground, coughing some more. Aradia moves closer to hold Jade in her arms, rolling Jade over on her back. She was a mess of fur and blood all over her, and some on the sports bra she was wearing. Jade coughs and takes a breath to say in a hoarse voice,

JADE: whats up bella swan

ARADIA: oh shush!

Aradia buries her face in Jade's hair, she whispers,

ARADIA: i was so worried

JADE: awh, she cares about me!

ARADIA: of course i do! you are my friend

ARADIA: more importantly why didnt you tell me you were a werewolf!

ARADIA: that is so cool! that is way beyond cool! i would have kept your secret you know

JADE: wow youre not gonna ask me like, if im okay or if im sustaining any lethal injuries or anything huh?

ARADIA: oh god im sorry! are you okay?!

Jade laughs, but tries not to laugh too hard as to hurt her gut,

JADE: haha im joking, im joking!!! im fine :)
JADE: you saw me, i took it like a champ!
JADE: i heal up pretty quickly in this state too...
ARADIA: are you sure? i have a band aid
JADE: oh yes a band aid would do wonders for me right about now
ARADIA: one of your many listless superpowers i assume?
JADE: yeah hehe...

Jade sits up but winces, stretching her back and then slouching. Even when seated she was taller than Aradia. Without her glasses she looks wistful, almost deep in thought-- that or it's the blood that adds to the effect. Jade looks away, and squeezes her own arm. It's a nervous habit Aradia has come to know about her.

ARADIA: is everything alright?
JADE: i just... wish you didnt have to see me like this
ARADIA: oh jade you know i do not mind at all!
ARADIA: in fact i think you look pretty badass
JADE: thank you! i appreciate that but...
JADE: i guess im just... not used to having anyone else know, heh

She looks up to give a toothy grin with her puppy dog eyes, her fangs clearly showing.

JADE: its honestly really embarrassing for me to even think about it
JADE: this affliction i have that just makes "the weird girl" even
fucking weirder
ARADIA: hey! dont put down the weird girls i love them
ARADIA: and i happen to be one of them
JADE: haha, yeah, i guess so huh

A knowing silence is shared between the two of them.

JADE: ...do you ever feel alone in your weird?
JADE: like this is my weird
JADE: there are many like it, but this one is mine
ARADIA: there are other werewolves?!
JADE: no! well, maybe?! i dont actually know
ARADIA: yes i do get you though
ARADIA: how many other people around here do you see dedicating the
prime years of their life to ghost hunting?
JADE: fair enough!
ARADIA: but... at least ive always got someone around to keep me
company while im being my weird... if that makes sense

The two share a longing look, smiling warmly at the other, the moonlight catching their faces just right. Jade's dog ears droop as she reaches out to hold Aradia's hand

JADE: then with you, i think this weird girl can manage

ARADIA: well just so you know i do not see you any differently

ARADIA: other than that you are now officially the coolest person i know

JADE: really?! who was it before me?

ARADIA: tavros but dont tell sollux i said that

They giggle in the quiet of the forest. Jade inhales deeply, and springs back up to stand. She holds out her hand to help Aradia up. She stands to lean into a hug. Jade's bit of chest fur adds to the extra warmth,

ARADIA: youre like a big cozy blanket!

JADE: dont get too comfy! this fur gets absolutely everywhere

Just then a ringing from Aradia's backpack comes up. It's her phone; she answers on speaker.

ARADIA: hello

TAVROS: aRADIA, do YOU NEED HELP? SHOULD WE CALL THE POLICE?

ARADIA: tavros it has not been two hours yet

SOLLUX: ii told yoooouuuu

TAVROS: i KNOW, i KNOW BUT i REALLY COULDN'T SLEEP WELL YOU KNOW,

TAVROS: SOLLUX WAS PRACTICALLY THREATENING ME WITH RANDOM BEAR FACTS AND HOW IT CAN RUN AT LIKE, uH, 50 MILES PER HOUR,,

SOLLUX: ii 2aiid 35 miile2 per hour.

TAVROS: HONESTLY i WOULD HAVE BEEN FINE WITH IT UNTIL HE TOLD ME HOW FUCKING SCARY MAMA BEARS ARE,

TAVROS: iF YOU SEE A CUTE BABY BEAR, do NOT APPROACH IT!!!

TAVROS: i SWEAR IF ONLY JADE WERE THERE,,,

JADE: hi tavros!

TAVROS: oH! SOLLUX, JADE CAME BACK AFTER ALL!!!

SOLLUX: fuckiin called iit. they love each other.

ARADIA: i will be coming home soon tavros thank you for worrying

TAVROS: nO PROBLEM, gET HOME SAFE ALRIGHT,,,

ARADIA: hah alright

Aradia hangs up and holds Jade's rugged hand,

JADE: well you heard the guy, we love each other!

ARADIA: ah i suppose that means we will have to settle this with a date?

JADE: it would be my honor!

JADE: but can i like, crash for the night

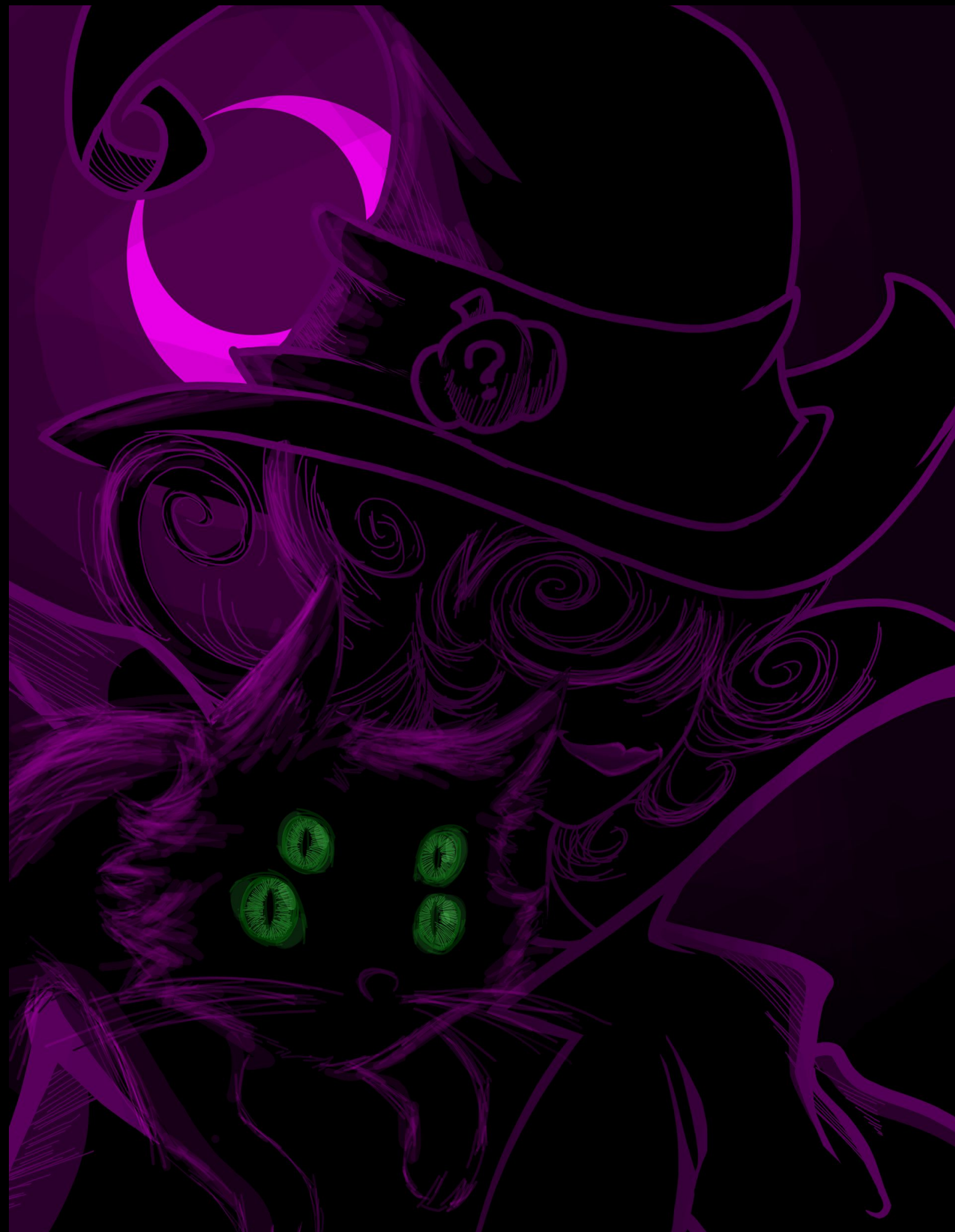
JADE: ive got a bone that needs to pop back in place asap. preferably on a nice couch

ARADIA: of course! but who said you would sleep on the couch?

JADE: okay, but im warning you! lotsa fur to clean up

ARADIA: lets make it a team effort?

JADE: deal :p



Roxward

mebi

@MEBI96862134 (Twitter)

My Moirail is a Werecat!
Gabu
@melonsharks (Twitter)



Calloween
Saturn
@saturnalart (Twitter)





Secret Admirer
Ribbot
@ribbotics (Twitter)



That's Just How She Smiles

JayPasta

@jayPastaForce (Twitter), @jayPasta (tumblr)



Those Meddling Kids

Meridiantears

@meridiantears (tumblr/twitter) @briannalundgren (instagram)

Ghost Spook

Ghost Spook

Jojo (Funk McLovin)

@FunkMcLovin (Twitter)

Are You Afraid of the Dark? Rose Lalonde Edition

"Everyone knows ghost stories aren't real, Rose!" June said, stuffing a s'more in her mouth. Jade watched in awe as the morsel was obliterated in record time.

"Yeah ghosts are fake as fuck, they're not scary at all," agreed Dave, joining Jade to watch his friend shovel in s'mores like a s'more backhoe.

"My ghost stories are certainly that, June. What's more... They're true," Rose said with a quiet dignity, crossing her leg on the stump at the edge of their campfire.

"Mph-" June gesticulated, for she couldn't speak with her mouth as full as it was. "I'll tell you what. If you can scare me, I'll give you a hundred bucks!"

A grin tugged Rose's raven-colored lips.

"I take cash or check, Miss Egbert."

Rose turned the flashlight under her chin, the stereotypical visage of the campfire ghost-story-teller. The shadows made her usually soft features sharp in shadow, and her lavender eyes were even more wide than usual.

"It all started long ago, on a night like tonight-" Rose began.

"Oh man, what are the odds?" Dave said, eliciting a chuckle from his peers. Rose was undeterred, continuing with a knowing smirk.

"A night like tonight, crisp and clear. The moon shone high above... Four friends went into the woods, much like us, on a benign trip. One friend, a lovely girl with raven hair, walked into the woods to gather

sticks for the fire."

Rose looked at Jade when she spoke, and in spite of herself, Jade glanced at her hair, which was quite raven. June, too, went so far as to run a hand through hers. Dave leaned back, watching amused.

"The girl didn't return for ages, and her three friends became worried. She was something of a mountain woman, familiar with the woods. She was the last person to return late from a firewood trip, so they set out to look for her."

"Was she okay?" June asked, nerves creeping into her voice.

"Don't worry, June, it's not real!" insisted Jade, but she sounded unconvinced. Rose continued.

"It was utterly strange. The group couldn't find their lost friend. Not a trace, not a scrap of cloth nor a splash of blood. All they found was a pile of sticks."

The group was quiet, now, even Dave had leaned forward to listen.

"Later, a search party combed the woods for her, but she was never found... But they did find an old doll. A small one, the kind a kindly grandmother might keep on a shelf above the fireplace. The friends took the doll from the woods as a reminder of their mysteriously missing friend..."

The group took a breath. Rose couldn't believe how easy it'd been to goad them in. They didn't speak, and the surrounding woods crackled.

"Years passed. The friends passed the doll between them, in memory of their lost friend. The police never found a body, no sign of a struggle, nothing. The friends had put it out of their minds. Until one day..."

Rose paused. A delicious pause for her, a pause which her friends all didn't dare break.

"One friend dropped the doll, the little raven haired porcelain doll, dropped it on the floor, shattering its sweet little face. When they dropped the doll, you see..."

Rose looked from June, to Jade, to Dave.

"...it bled."

Rose's voice seemed to fade into the forest. There was a long silence, broken by Jade laughing softly.

"Ha! Haha, don't worry guys. Like I said. All a fake story. R-right, Rose?" she said, offering comfort to her now-spooked buds. Rose simply turned the flashlight off, shrugging.

"Who's to say," she said.

It was darker now, the fire was fading and the sun had set all the way. Rose prodded the fire with a stick, crossing her legs.

"Fire's going out," Dave said, trying desperately to change the subject.

"Sure is," Rose said. "Jade, dear, would you care to grab some more firewood from the woods? Or would you rather go to sleep?"

Jade blanched. She looked from Rose to her friends.

"Haha- No, yeah." Jade exaggerated a yawn. "No way, I'm sleepy! Right, guys?" Dave and June nodded

enthusiastically.

"Very well, friends," Rose said, smugly. "Sleep well."



Trick or Treat

Ricemilk

@ricemilk413 (Twitter&tumblr)



Mio

Marinaraimpasta

@Marinaraimpasta (Twitter)

Orb Time
Dani Calzone
@danicalzone (Instagram/Twitter)





Moon Prism Power Make Up!
Evan and Kaylie
@shadowdustcosplay and @calliopevox (Twitter)

shit just got real.... SPOOKY



Beta Kids Happy Halloween

ZowerLemon

@zowerlemon (Instagram/Twitter)



[Download the MP3](#)

Pendulum

Tick Tock goes the clock
Rolling eyes, Golden glock

Tick Tock, fused with time
Seeing red through seeing lime

Tick Tock, the final hours
Before he craves all fates devoured .

Tick Tock, the grandfather scrikes.
Time is ticking.
Time to strike.

Natal sarcophagus, the crowning of a king,
"He's the start to your end," the angels sing.
"Time is up, yours he'll replace,
Bow as you stare double death in the face!"

Souls are screaming as consciousness rots,
Illusions broken, the tale pulled taut
Burning bones and corpses fried
Skeletal dominance flashing in pride

Heart throbs slow,
The future is Void.
Hope is hopeless,
Life is his toy.

Time stands still;
Bite the Space dust of death
And look into the Light,
As you breathe your last Breath.

...

The game is not over. That story is fluff.
A universe pales to a dimensional snuff.

To acknowledge the story, YOU soil his sweat.
As long as you stay, your pulse is a threat.

You read with a distance, but the farther you tread,
The closer he gets

The closer you're dead.

Ticks and tocks, your end is neigh.
Gallopings clops foreboding decay

The dongs ding and the whinnies chime.
Bare your neck for Father Time.

He's already here. You're already gone.
The further you read, the closer his song.

You're still reading this, as this ticking ascends.

You could stop this narrative, though you're destined to sin.

You don't think you can do that. The story can't end.

Your passion outweighs your power to win.

Prying keeps his existence from yours to disrupt.

But you can't stop reading; you don't care if you're cut.

The second your perspective switched into two.
You were trapped in this narrative.

You're stuck in here too.



[Download the MP3](#)

Scary Stories to Tell in the Dork

Written & Edited by: Jonaya Riley
@AltUniverseWash (Twitter/Ao3)

Performed by:
June Egbert: Jan Aponte
@Janapontemuvo (Twitter)

Rose Lalonde: Tamara Fritz
@totalspiffage (Twitter)

Dave Strider: Giovanna D. Mattucci
@OutOfTooch (Twitter)

Jade Harley: Nickolette Kong
@NikkiYael (Twitter)



PUMPKIN PARTY ZINE!

SCARY STORIES TO TELL IN THE DORK

Writing: Jonaya Riley (@AltUniverseWash)
June Egbert: Jan Aponte (@Janapontemuvo)
Rose Lalonde: Tamara Fritz (@totalspiffage)
Dave Strider: Giovanna D. Mattucci (@outoftooch)
Jade Harley: Nickolette Kong (@NikkiYael)
Jane Crocker: Sahar Iman (@omnistruck)
Jake English: Luke Campbell (@acousticdonuts)
Roxy Lalonde: Deezumaki (@THEEDeezumaki)
Dirk Strider: Cal O'Malley (@mintchochimp)



Transcript

Jane Crocker: Sahar Iman
@omnistruck (Twitter)

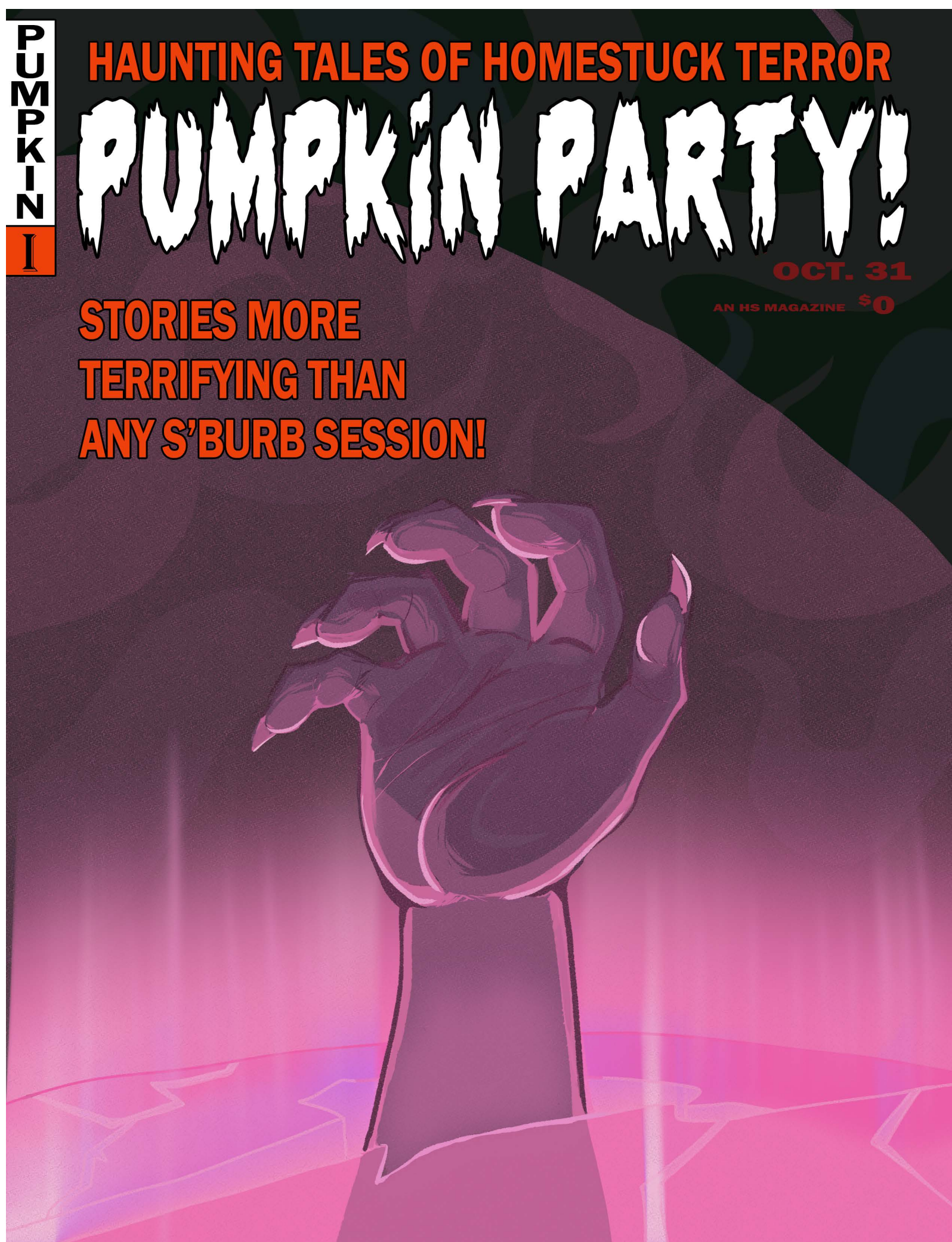
Jake English: Luke Campbell
@acousticdonuts (Twitter)

Roxy Lalonde: Deezumaki
@THEEDeezumaki (Twitter)

Dirk Strider: Cal O'Malley
@mintchochim (Twitter)

Content Warning: The pieces after this section carry content warnings for blood, gore, partial nudity, implied cannibalism, disturbing sound effects, insects, trypophobia, scopophobia, eye trauma, and decapitation.

If any of these subjects (or material with horrific subject matter) are disturbing or triggering to you, please proceed with caution.



PUMPKIN
I

HAUNTING TALES OF HOMESTUCK TERROR PUMPKIN PARTY!

OCT. 31

AN HS MAGAZINE \$0

STORIES MORE
TERRIFYING THAN
ANY S'BURB SESSION!

Horror Time Title

Art: Cro

@YoItsCro (Twitter)

Layout: Jonaya

@AltUniverseWash

(Twitter)

Let it Shine

Uber

@rudfkr0316 (Twitter)



Download the Video

story & art by Jonaya Riley (@AltUniverseWash)
special thanks to Cro (@yoitscro) for the idea!

8blue Sky Forever

Vriska was seeing the dim twilight of the early night sky for the first time.

Well, not the first time in the literal sense... but the first time she was really *seeing* it. It was strange how she'd taken it for granted all this time she'd been alive. Alternia wasn't a world that indulged self-reflection... typically.

It hurts

Yeah, that's generally how this works. She would've laughed, but she was losing a bit too much blood at this point. Even a cerulean isn't invulnerable... after all, I know all about how much it takes.

W8... you're...

She should probably save the breath she's got to admire that beautiful starscape blooming overhead. It was really... breathtaking.

I made a joke to myself. I would've laughed, but I stopped finding the humor in this a few hundred iterations back.

I know your voice...

Of course you do, you silly wiggler.

Not a wiggler... ten sweeps already...

You're adorable - abso-fucking-lutely *adorable*! It's been a while since I genuinely *liked* one of you, you know? This has become such a mechanical process.

You stabbed me.

Several times and with a great degree of hostile intent, yes.

Why do you sound different?

Is this 8etter?

God... I gave that stupid bullshit up eons ago.

8ut... why are you doing this?

Once upon a time, I would've just told you it was because I wanted to. A little while later, I would've told you it was the result of my predilection for co-opting narrative control. Then, after some degree of self-reflection, I would probably say it had to do with my desire to perfect my nuanced direction of my own story - to the point where I can simply... be whatever the fuck I want, honestly.

(I'd waste time monologuing about narrative devices, but honestly she doesn't have the time for it)

Now... after all this bloody time.

(she's fading out now - having trouble keeping herself conscious and even more trouble following the conversation. Just to keep everyone up-to-date on the status of the latest victim of my narrative subsumption...)

After all this bloody time what?

(this will be the last thing she hears)

I'm doing this...

...because I want to.





Apocalypse Empress
Emily
@FishyDizz (Twitter)



All Smiles Here Bro

Neon

@MercilessNaps (Twitter/Instagram)



Apex Predator
Uber
@rudfkr0316 (Twitter)



Dead Daves

Indigonite0

@Indigonite0 (Twitter)



[Download the MP3](#)

A Splinter of Time Abandoned

Jonaya Riley

@AltUniverseWash (Twitter/Ao3)

Bucky Grant

@raddifferent (Twitter)



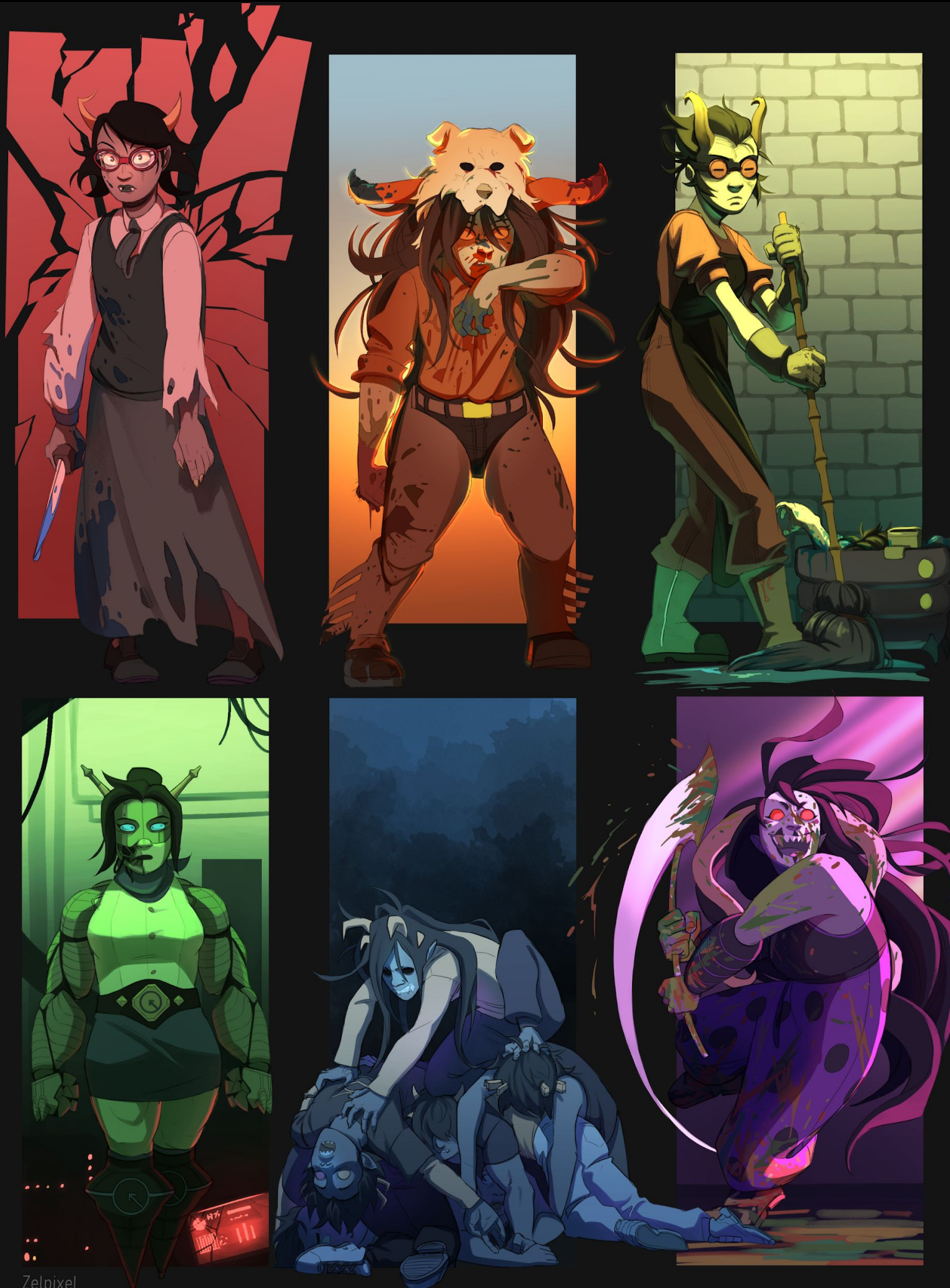
Transcript



Family Photo

Uber

@rudfkr0316 (Twitter)



Girls' Night
ZelPixel
@zelpixel (Twitter)



Is That Any Way To Talk to your Mother?

Meagan

@mevangeline723 (Instagram)

Crocker's

Crocker's
Eromancery
@eromancery (Twitter)

CROCKER'S: A HORROR STORY

By Eromancery

1

We all know the story behind Crocker's. When her species' home planet was destroyed by meteors, the empress of the troll race was at the forefront of the expedition to find a new habitable planet. One she eventually found on Earth. But to establish a home here, she would need clout. A smart woman, she realized that the fastest way to get this clout was not via politics, but rather via capitalism. And so, she discarded her planetary empire for a fast food empire and launched the Crocker's franchise of restaurants.

It was an overnight success. Crocker's burgers didn't taste like anything else on the market. Safety concerns were addressed with the only S+ grade any health inspector has ever given out. The Empress's gambit had paid off, with interest. She purchased a small, uninhabited island in the Pacific Ocean, which she converted into the capitol of the New Alternian Empire.

Years in the future, though not many, trolls have integrated themselves into just about every society on Earth. Grey skin and horns aren't worth sparing a second glance at, thanks to the smiling, fuchsia-blooded face kindly inviting you inside her house of grilled meat, in every neighborhood in every country on every continent on the planet.

Jane Crocker took a bite out of her burger as she read the words off her laptop screen. If Dirk knew she was writing an expose on Crocker's while eating at one of their restaurants, she was sure she'd never be able to see his Pesterchum icon ever again without the word "irony" reverberating throughout her skull.

Assuming this ended up as an expose, anyway. Looking at what she had written, it read more like a promotional blurb on the website than it did a scathing tell-all by an up-and-coming teen sleuth. Her source had been confident, but she was.... Eccentric.

Speaking of the devil, a familiar pink cat icon popped up on her screen.

TG: hows it goin super sleuth

TG: dig up any dirt yet?

GG: No, Roxy, I haven't. You're sure the information you gave me was accurate?

TG: :O

TG: janey do you doubt my L33T HAXXIN SKILLS?

GG: Perish the thought! I would never doubt the skills of my best friend!

GG: I'm simply saying it's possible the information you found was inaccurate!

TG: not possible

TG: those docs came from five different company servers

TG: if theyre wrong ill eat my cat

TG: *hat

TG: ill eat my cat too im that sure

Jane sighed and looked at the last paragraph on her document.

Recent events, however, have raised doubts about the company's fairy-tale ending. Leaked documents from the five major meat companies reveal that NONE of them had ever done business with Crockercorp. Last week, an anonymous hacker released shareholder-only documents from Crockercorp revealing that the percentage of the company's budget dedicated to purchasing ingredients from suppliers is EIGHT TIMES LOWER than their closest competitor. So the question becomes: Where is Crocker's getting their meat? And, given recent scandals brands like IKEA have had, what exactly is in the meat?

It read like tabloid journalism. She could cite as many secondhand sources that suggested this or claimed that, but unless she got herself actual evidence, this story was nothing more than guesswork.

GG: Roxy, are you sure you can't send me those documents? It would make this all so much simpler.

TG: jane id love to but theres a lot of incriminating metadata n things and it would rllly suck to be exploded by a fast food paramilitary death squad yknow?

TG: i know you dont like it when i besmooch the name of house crocker n all that but u know theyd do it

TG: *besmirch

TG: screenshots are the best i can do

GG: Roxy, you know that we're unrelated >:B

GG: Crocker is a common name and it happened to fit her species weird naming conventions!

TG: janey.... crocker has 7 letters

GG: Whatever! I guess I'll simply have to do some old-fashioned detective work!

TG: sneakin through air vents in a skintight catsuit? i didnt know you had it in you but i approve

GG: No, silly! John's class is taking a field trip to a Crocker's for some modern troll history thing. I'll just chaperone and sneak away to do some investigation.

TG: o that sounds like a way better plan than mine LMAO

TG: good luck janey! lemme know how it goes!

Jane smiled to herself. Roxy could be a bit weird sometimes, but she was a reliable friend. There weren't many people she trusted more.

2

A week later, Jane was surrounded by a crowd of rowdy thirteen year-olds and regretting her decision immensely. If it wasn't having to explain to them that saying slurs was bad, even ironically, then it was having to comfort some of the more coulrophobic kids when someone dressed as Grand Highburger came out to explain to the group how a mascot was designed (Making sure to remind them that the courts had decided that a fast-food Juggalo was legally distinct from any fast-food clowns rival establishments might employ).

It came as a welcome surprise when she felt her phone buzzing in her pocket. The reception in the building was so bad she hadn't been able to send a pesterchum message since she had gotten in. She quickly excused herself to the bathroom and hid herself in a stall before checking to see who it was.

TG: hows the international gill of mystery thing goin?

TG: *girl

GG: Roxy! I've been trying to message you all day! The connection here is awful!

GG: and not well, I'm afraid. This place is a maze! I don't know how I'm supposed to find anything!

TG: yeah the walls in those places are lead lined or somefin

TG *thin

TG: lucky for u im a hacker extraordinaire n all

TG: speakin of i have a solution for your second problem

TG: managed to hack me a map for u!

GG: Roxy, you're a lifesaver! Send it over!

TG: about that

TG: pesterchum still cant embed images n i cant get you net access outside of it

TG: so im just gonna have to give u directions

It was annoying, but it was help, and Jane needed all the help she could get. After a few mishaps getting herself oriented (Roxy's view was top-down), Jane found herself wandering through the garishly-painted corridors. It was eerie, without other people around, and she felt like she was going in circles.

GG: Roxy, are you sure these directions are right? I've made four lefts in a row!

TG: janey you gotta trust me! See that picture on the wall? It was of a burger before right? its a sausage now.

GG: Huh. So it is. How is that even possible?

TG: all the hallways are sloped downward

TG: somethin about stairs being unlucky in troll culture

TG: ive been getting you closer to the bassment dont worry

Reassured, Jane kept onward. After another half hour of wandering the halls and not running into anyone else, the hallway suddenly terminated in a single door, marked only with "STORAGE" in big, bold letters.

TG: alright this is the plaice

TG: go in there and hake some pictures

TG: *take

Jane obeyed.

The atmosphere of the storage room was in stark contrast to the endless white hallways before it, both figuratively and literally. The air inside the dimly lit concrete corridor was damp, thick with the heady miasma that comes with natural life.

As Jane walked further down the hallway, she began to hear footsteps coming from behind her. Startled, she looked around desperately for a place to hide, and found none. She pressed herself against the hard concrete wall and tried to look as inconspicuous as possible. The footsteps got louder, plodding towards her at a steady pace. She was screwed. There was no way whoever was coming wouldn't see her. Jane closed her eyes and prepared for the worst.

The footsteps got closer until Jane was sure they were right in front of her face, and then... went past her? Jane opened one eye slightly, and saw something she did not recognize at all moving further away from her. Had it ignored her?

Quickly peeling herself from the wall, Jane followed it to get a better look, and maybe see just where it was headed.

It was a good seven feet tall, and covered from head to toe in a chitinous shell that twisted and bulged asymmetrically, giving the impression of a misshapen tumor subsuming a body. Sliding past it, Jane saw that the creature's face was no different from the rest of its body, with no sensory organs she could make out. Was it blind?

Eyes turned to the thing, Jane was blindsided when it suddenly stopped moving, and found herself falling flat on her rear in a spacious chamber she hadn't seen approaching. Without the creature's ponderous footsteps, the sounds of machinery filled her ears, alongside muffled voices she couldn't quite make out.

Pumps and pipes were being tended to by more of the strange creatures, feeding into and out of various troughs. Stalls lined one of the walls, each containing a mass of some strange, pulsating grey material. Each mass had a pipe descending from the network of tubes into it, and what looked like an EKG monitor next to it.

Intrigued, Jane snapped a few photos with her phone before going in for a closer inspection. Each of the masses towered over her, gelatinous matter bubbling out of the openings on the stall door. On one, Jane could see what looked like dark orange lines marring its surface. Tentatively, Jane pressed her hand against it, shuddering at the texture as her hand sank in. The mass itself was uncomfortably warm, but was covered by a thin layer of some cold, greasy substance. Disgusted, Jane wiped her hand on her shirt.

A meaty tearing sound attracted her attention back to the stall. The lines on its surface had thickened, each weeping a thin trail of orange ichor down its surface. A muffled whimpering came from deep within the mass.

With no further fanfare, the mass split open, birthing a pile of dark orange entrails onto the floor, along with the horrific stench of rotten meat. Jane gagged, feeling her stomach protest. Through teary eyes, she saw the mass vomit more offal onto the ground, deflating enough to grant her a glimpse at where the tube entered the mass.

It was a face. One framed by a matted mess of black hair, with two candy-corn horns peeking out. The tube led directly into its mouth and nose. Its eyes were wide open, and completely dead.

Still retching from the stench, Jane pulled out her phone. She had to get out of here.

GG: roxy areyu there

GG: royx please i need help

GG: i need to get out of here.

GG: its trolls its always been trolls

GG: please roxy

TG: quit your blubberin im on my way

GG: what? What do you me

Without warning, one of the drone creatures pushed past Jane, making her drop her phone. She watched with horror as it mindlessly stepped on and crushed it as it began collecting the orange sludge from within the stall into an icebox.

She felt something press onto her head, and her whole body went numb. She couldn't even turn her head as a voice came from behind her

CC: Whale whale whale

CC: what do we have here

CC: Impressed with my operation? Its called gavage or somefin

CC: its French. Ridiculous language, dunno why your planet needs so many.

CC: If you're wonderin about your frond, don't worry. She's safe and sound in whatever little hovel she lives in.

CC: ive just been catfishing you ever since you came into the restaurant.

CC: and you fell for it hook line and sinker.

CC: now what am I going to do with you?

CC: hm... Could always use another spokesperson

CC: especially one that isn't a dumbass clownfish.

There was a sinister chuckle, and Jane's world went black.

"The Truth About Crocker's:" By Jane Crocker (no relation)

Many of you have already heard about the accusations made of the Crocker corporation, and the allegations that they are sourcing their meat in dangerous, and potentially unethical ways. This article details my journey into the heart of one of their locations, and discovered the truth

about the previously-secret environmentally friendly and highly sustainable farming practices brought over from a far-away planet...



Kinder Surprise
Beelzebub Boba
@beelzebubble2 (Twitter)



LeKNIFEra

Kansas

@kansastuck (Twitter)



Zelpixel

Marvus Sexy n Spooky

Zelpixel

@zelpixel (Twitter)



Pulp Monsteen Power Hour
Egosweetheart
@egosweetheart (Twitter)

Gutter Bones

Gutter Bones

Bug

@bugbeeee (Twitter), @FineSpecimenRetrieved (A03)

gutter bones

By bugbeeee / FineSpecimenRetrieved

Rose Lalonde had made a pact. Perhaps she didn't remember the details of it. Perhaps the nuances of the agreement had been lost in translation. Perhaps she simply didn't know. But They did. They knew what contract had been made between Her and Them.

Rose Lalonde had made a pact. It was time she held up her end of the deal.

-

It started, like all things, very simply. Veins of ash that would creep up Rose's skin when she was alone and no-one was looking. A quiet pulsing sensation that didn't quite match up with her heartbeat. The slow creeping dread that inched up her spine in the moments between thoughts.

Perhaps most concerning was the soft gnaw of hunger that seemed to slither every now and then, never quite sated no matter how much she ate.

Something was Wrong.

And yet, for reasons she didn't know, she never voiced a word of concern. Every time she thought to get help, it would... slip away like sand through her fingers, quietly cascading out of her memory and into the deep abyss of her mind, where something eagerly swallowed it up. So these small things remained unspoken, like a mysterious lump found on the skin, or a strange mole you weren't quite convinced was dangerous.

Yet.

It wasn't until she was alone in the bathroom, getting ready for the day ahead that she noticed the webbing across her face, wriggling and writhing beneath her skin like maggots you couldn't see or reach, but knew were there. Her breath hitched, tongue weighed down by a force she couldn't fight against, even as she tried to flinch backwards. But her limbs were like lead, slow and stuttering, as though they weren't quite her own but someone else's entirely. It wasn't until her fist collided with the mirror, smashing it into thousands of tiny sharp shards, that she could move again.

"What the fuck," stumbled out of her mouth, chest heaving as she sucked in air she didn't even realise was missing.

Her eyes darted down to the single remaining shard on the mirror, the cracks creeping across like the same web she had seen on her face. Except there was nothing there. Her face was pristine, no blemish or mark marring it in some way.

“Rose?” a concerned voice called out. “Is everything alright? I heard something break!”

Rose opened her mouth to speak, but- nothing came out. The words she tried to say stayed stuck in her throat, and instead her jaw and tongue began to move, forming sentences against her will.

“I am fine, my love!” her voice replied. “Just hit the mirror!”

“Ah, very well! I’ll be heading off now to the caverns. Don’t break anymore mirrors!” Kanaya said teasingly, and her laughter echoed up the stairs, joyful and amused. Rose’s body laughed as well, and she couldn’t wrench her tongue away from the phantom grip that kept it moving, spilling out a farewell *she* didn’t say.

Her eyes remained transfixed on the remains of the mirror, and she swore something looked back at her. It *smiled*, a chorus of whispers joining her wife’s distant laughter, and Rose’s breath hitched desperately.

The hunger in her belly ached, and her hand reached forward, slowly grabbing a fistful of shards. Her head cocked to the side as she watched them glitter like stars against her skin. Blood began to well up, viscous and sticky, and she couldn’t tear her gaze away from the way the shards seemed to glow. She lifted it up jerkily, mouth widening to consume the glass coated in crimson.

Rose bit down, the tacky, sweet taste of blood covering the sharpness of the shards, even as they cut into her mouth and let more blood flow. Her teeth ground down, a gentle crunching filling the room, and she couldn’t help but be reminded of the time she broke her arm as a child, of the sound it had made.

It sounded very similar to the cracking of glass between her teeth now.

Finally, she swallowed, the mixture of blood, saliva, and glass trickling down her throat like molasses. Her mouth burned, but-

The hunger was gone.

Rose looked at her hands. They did not shake or tremble. Her body showed no fear, no delirium or terror. Instead, her lips pulled up into a smile, flecks of red staining the pristine white of her teeth.

The remaining shard on the cabinet split with a loud snapping sound, and her hand ached sharply. Her eyes slowly moved to look at her outstretched hand, fingers clenched around the crumbling shards.

Had she...?

And then it was finished. She collapsed like a doll, limbs finally free from whatever had taken hold of her. Rose curled up into a ball, body shivering in pain and confusion as she tried to grasp at what had just happened.

The bathroom light seemed too bright, as though it were exposing her to something she desperately shouldn't be noticed by. She unfurled herself and crawled to the light switch, flicking it off with bloody fingers. The dark fell across her like a blanket, and relief swept through her limbs. Distantly, she noticed that her hand was still gripped tightly around the last shard of glass, fingers digging into the edges desperately. She could hear the soft drip, drip, drip of her blood, but she made no effort to clean it up. Instead, she sat by the light switch, body trembling gently as she waited in the darkness.

-

"...-ose? Rose?!"

Light flooded the bathroom, and she flinched, eyes roving around the brightened room. Nothing happened. Nothing was watching her. Hands came down to rest on her shoulders suddenly, and she gasped, pulling air into her lungs as though she had held her breath for... for...

How long had she been in here?

"Kanaya?" she croaked out, blinking blearily as the world came into focus.

"You weren't responding," her wife whispered in return, gaze filled with terror as she gripped her tightly.

"I... the blood-?" Rose mumbled, and Kanaya blinked in confusion, before she jerked forward to inspect her.

"Are you injured? Where did you hurt yourself?" she snapped out, eyes darting up and down her body as she scanned for any sign of blood.

Rose lifted her hands.

They were clean.

She looked around at the bathroom.

It was as pristine as ever, save for the broken mirror and the shards of glass scattered across the floor.

Had it all been a hallucination? Some fantasy conjured up out of stress or illness?

Rose wet her lips, and found that no, she could still taste the blood and glass, as well as something *other* that she couldn't quite pin down. She wasn't sure she wanted to know

either. But aside from the lingering copper taste on her tongue, there was no evidence that she had ever cut herself, not on her hands, not in her mouth, and not in her throat.

It was like nothing had happened.

“Rose?” Kanaya said again, voice lowered in worry. “What happened?”

It felt like her tongue was lead again, weighing inside her mouth like a stone, and Rose could barely force the words out.

“I don’t know,” she choked out. “I don’t know.”

-

“Are you sure?” Kanaya fretted again, hands hovering around her face, peering intently into her eyes. “I can happily do it if you’re not feeling well.”

Rose shook her head. She’d been cooped up in the house for days after her... episode. She needed to get out or else she’d start climbing up the walls.

“I’ll be fine, Kanaya. I need the fresh air,” she explained, grabbing one of her hands and placing a small kiss onto Kanaya’s fingers. Her wife shook her head fondly, but leaned in nonetheless to rest her forehead against hers.

“Alright. If you need anything, or feel sick, come back immediately, yes?”

She gave her one last kiss, before pulling back, and opening the front door.

“Of course. I’ll be back shortly. Message me if there’s anything else you need from the store.”

Kanaya waved goodbye as she left, watching her closely, and Rose chuckled lowly. She’d been fretting ever since she had found her in the bathroom, and as much as she adored her wife, she really did need some space. Rose had ultimately chalked up everything to a... hyper-realistic hallucination, with the taste of blood simply inserting itself from one of her memories due to the traumatic nature of the illusion. As for why it had happened... well, she was still trying to figure that out. Ultimately however, it had passed, and she wasn’t going to dwell on it any longer.

The evening glow cast the neighbourhood around her in deep luscious orange, and Rose found herself smiling. Despite all the struggles, all the grief and trauma... they had managed to build something beautiful in the end. She let herself take in the streets before her, even though she knew them as well as the back of her hand.

Her eyes traced the gnarled lines of the trees, the vibrancy of the flowers, the laughter of children in the distance. This was peace, she decided.

It wasn't long before she reached the store, a small smile still on her face, and she quickly tugged out the list Kanaya had given to her. Milk, eggs, bread, flour... the basics. She wandered up to the fridges, basket in hand, and reached in to grab a bottle of milk.

The fluorescent lights of the supermarket seemed to grow brighter, bathing her in a sterile light. She swallowed softly, and ducked her head.

It was all in her mind. It wasn't real.

The fridge was cold. Colder than she expected, the chill sinking into her skin like fangs into soft meat, spreading down her fingertips and up her arm. Her hand clamped around the milk bottle, harsher than she had meant to, but she reasoned it was because she was on edge. She tried to pull her arm out.

It didn't budge.

Her teeth came down to bite her tongue, the sharp sting lancing through her mouth as blood gently welled up from the wounds. Ice continued to travel up her arm, plunging into her very bones and sitting there, nesting into her marrow like a parasite she couldn't escape. Her fingers were turning blue, she noticed distantly. Blue and purple and black, like rot and poison trapped inside her veins, begging her to purge it, to get it out, get it out, *get it out-*

"Miss?"

Rose yanked her arm out of the fridge, almost dropping the bottle from the speed. A shop assistant stared at her in worry, eyebrows creased and eyes pitying.

"Is everything alright?" they asked.

Rose swallowed, ignoring the smooth slide of blood down her throat. The lights were back to normal.

"I'm fine," she forced out, "just lost in thought."

They nodded, but they didn't look convinced.

"I'll be over there if you need me," they said kindly. Rose gave a sharp nod, watching as they left back to the counter, eyes flicking to look back at her every so often.

She turned back to her arm.

It was the same shade as always.

Another hallucination?

But she could swear that she still felt the chill in her skin, still couldn't move her fingers from the numbness.

It wasn't real, she reminded herself.

Hunger stirred in her stomach.

She grabbed the rest of the items she needed as quickly as possible, staying as far away as possible from the fridges. She barely looked at the shop assistant as they scanned her items, even though she could feel their worried glances at her. She didn't stick around, instead bolting out of the shop the moment she could, eyes focused firmly on the ground below her.

If she didn't look up, she reasoned, then she wouldn't see anything.

Except there were cracks in the pavement, cracks that seemed to slowly grow bigger and deeper, a yawning chasm peeking through the gaps when she dared to look. She took in a shaky breath, ignoring the eyes that stared at her from within the darkness.

And then something slammed into her, and she was forced to look up.

"Watch where you're going!" A voice snapped out, fury laced in his words, but Rose couldn't pay attention to him. Her gaze was fixed on the concrete surrounding her, the ancient vines and moss that snaked around them. She had wandered off past her house, into the beginning of the Old World.

"Sorry," she muttered out, and the man scoffed.

"Fucking idiot," he snarled under his breath, turning to leave, but-

Rose's stomach growled, deep and desperate. She was hungry. So, so hungry.

The man's back stared at her, open and inviting. Unbidden, she took a step forward, the crunch of leaves seeming to echo between the walls. The man turned back to look at her, eyes narrowed in suspicion. He opened his mouth and said something, but she couldn't hear him.

Whispers seemed to flood her mind, all clamouring for attention, and she took another step forward. The man had begun to turn red, and it seemed like he was shouting at her. He wasn't moving. He wasn't leaving.

He was right there.

And

she

was

so

very

Hungry-

Rose wasn't sure what happened next. But she remembered her body darting forward, hands mottled with purple and blue as her claws reached out to grab him, to **consume him**. She remembered feeling her mouth open, wider than anything she should have been capable of, sharp teeth sinking into the sweet flesh beneath her. She remembered his skin bursting like overripe fruit hitting the pavement, spraying crimson across her face and the floor.

She remembered the crunching, the chewing, the sweet slide of meat down her throat and finally, finally filling her stomach.

She remembered the hunger receding, and the taste of blood clinging to her lips, shards of bone between her teeth.

She remembered finally, *finally*, feeling full.

-

When she came to, the body was gone. She was alone in the clearing, her bag of groceries dropped beside her and spilling onto the floor, with no evidence of anything having happened a few moments before.

The bread was moldy, she noticed absentmindedly. The milk wasn't much better, yellowish liquid pooling at the top as the spoiled chunks sank to the bottom. The sky was dark, an endless void where before the evening sun had still been shining.

How long had she been here?

How long had she consumed?

The strange calm that had nestled in her bones fled, and Rose let out a dry sob, teeth clacking sharply as she tried to hold back tears.

What the fuck had that been? What the fuck was happening to her?

A scream bubbled in the back of her throat, but she bit it back violently. Some small desperate part of her told her not to. That screaming would only make it *worse*.

She didn't want to know what *it* was.

Rose stumbled back to her home, feet clumsy and body swaying, as though she was drunk. She opened the door and tripped inside, shaking fingers letting the plastic bag slip to the floor. The rotten milk burst as it hit the floor, chunks slowly pooling onto the tiled floor, and despite the stumbling panic that had been pounding in her heart moments before, she felt... distant. Disconnected.

It wasn't until she heard footsteps pounding against the stairs that she snapped to attention. Kanaya peered at her from the bannister, dried tear tracks stark against her face.

She blinked once, twice, before letting out a shuddering gasp of “Rose!” and practically tripping down the stairs to throw herself at her.

“Where have you been?” she sobbed out hoarsely. “You’ve... It’s been three days!”

Three days. She had been gone for... three days. Rose’s heart sank, and she felt bile bubble up in the back of her throat.

“I-”

Hunger gnawed in her stomach, and suddenly she could see the warm flesh of her wife’s body, the sweet slide of jade blood that would quench her parched throat, the bones that would finally, finally silence the screaming starvation that never left. Rose jerked backwards, a quiet whine escaping her lips.

No.

No.

“Rose?”

Kanaya’s voice was muffled, the words slowly slipping into static and void, and Rose’s fingers twitched. It would be so easy. So, so easy to reach out in a mockery of an embrace, and finally **feast-**

No!

She shoved Kanaya back, and she slipped against the rotten milk, body colliding with the floor. Regret and self-loathing slithered up her skin, but she couldn’t stay here. She couldn’t help her up.

She could not let herself linger for another moment. Eyes burning, she turned away and bolted out the door, sprinting as fast as she could down the streets she had thought so peaceful and quaint before. Now though, the streetlights burned into her skull, while the shadows chased her with the slow ease of someone who knew they had already won.

She let out a dry sob, and tried to run faster, but her foot caught on a crack in the pavement, jettisoning her forward and into the pavement. Her face skidded across the asphalt, pain searing against her skin, but she couldn’t dare let herself pause.

Something moved in the corner of her eye, and she flinched, desperately trying to shove herself up. Except-

A hand was offered before her. The fingers were pale, so, so pale, flecks of red and grey seeming to stain the skin like paper. A part of her wanted to lurch forward and grab on, to pray that this stranger could pull her out of this nightmare, but... something screamed at her not to.

That if she took this hand, if she even looked up...

It would all be over.

She swallowed, and the lingering taste of blood gathered on her tongue, a mocking reminder of what she had done, of what she was *becoming*.

“You’ve struggled very bravely, little one,” a soft voice seemed to coo into her mind, and there was something desperately, horrifically familiar about it. And yet, she couldn’t quite tell what it was.

“What do you want?” she asked hoarsely, and the being tutted.

“Come now, Rosie darling. How quickly you forget.”

And despite her mind screaming, begging her not to, Rose looked up.

“Mom-?” she tried to say, but the moment she locked eyes with the being who wore her mother’s face, she knew she had made a mistake.

Possibly the biggest one in her life.

The being smiled indulgently, crouching down to lovingly stroke her face. Rose could not move. Just like in the bathroom, in the supermarket, something had slithered inside her limbs and kept her still.

Somehow, she didn’t think she would be able to break free like before.

“Yes, yes, dear. I am your mother, your progenitor, your creator. That was what we agreed on after all, young one.”

The thing that held her mother’s face seemed to twitch, and slowly the features slid off, creeping down, down, down, until the face of Beta Roxy Lalonde hit the floor with a wet sound.

The horror terror reached around to cradle her in a mockery of a parental embrace, and she could feel the icy wetness of a limb cup her cheek.

“You must be so hungry, poor dear. It is alright now, young one. Come. Let us feast.”

She felt herself stand up, the horror terror gripping her face, and slowly, she surveyed the world around her. It was quiet. Peaceful. The soft glow of the sun began to rise above the horizon, bathing the streets in golden light.

It was beautiful.

And it would finally sate her hunger.



Rosebath

Disteal

@distealart (Twitter)

Disteal



splinters and overthinking make you lose ur head apparently

Pan

@PanDaePan (Twitter)



Tomie Megido
Vorpos
@menenthass (Twitter)

Restless Dream

JayPasta

@jayPastaForce (Twitter), @jayPasta (tumblr)



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you m8ke me itch

Muse

@pageofminds (tumblr)



Fated

Absessive

@abessive_art (Twitter)

Harvest Moon

Something has gone terribly, horribly wrong.

John doesn't quite know what it is yet. He wakes up today and stretches, feeling his back pop as he lifts his arms above his head. It takes him a moment to figure out what the unsettling feeling in his chest is; the house is deadly silent.

The defeat of Lord English led the kids to a timeline where everything was going to be alright. Earth C was fashioned to their own making, the carapacians creating kingdoms in their wake. Although there was talk of a maybe democracy, or even a system where Jane ran as president, they quickly agreed that they'd rather just relax and actually do teenager shenanigans instead of running an entire fucking city.

John frowns at the silence and checks his phone. Normally, he'd have messages waiting for him from Dave, Jade, or even Karkat usually yelling about something exciting or something that they wanted him to watch. Despite this, his phone only has one thread unread with several messages.

TT: John.

TT: I realize that this might come as a fuckin' shock to you, but you're on your own this time. Before you go blaming Paradox Space again, I've been informed that this is an anomaly even to our timeline. Shit shouldn't have happened like this but here's hoping you can rewind the fuckin' clock.

TT: Or not, y'know, you can let this timeline crash and burn. Don't let me waste away in the goddamn void again.

TT: Good luck. Sorry for the hassle.

"The fuck," John quietly whispers, squinting at his messages with Dirk. "Striders are still *so weird*."

Regardless, it's still the only message sent from anyone. No long-winded speech from any of his friends, but it's not the weirdest thing that's happened to him so far so he ignores it. What still worries him though is the silence; Jane would typically wake up and bake anything ranging from cupcakes to sweets, and her humming doesn't echo through the hallways like it always does.

With a grunt, John slides off his bed and goes to his door. There's a moment of hesitation in his steps that John's learned to heed over the years, so he pauses and presses his body to the door. Still quiet. There's a faint whiff of candy in the air that feels strangely familiar, so John makes a brilliant decision to turn into the wind and let himself drift downstairs.

When he sees a very familiar lollipop nestled against the couch, he recoils and solidifies, dropping onto the staircase. John lets out an "OOF" when he lands and springs to his feet, staring in horror at

the red and green candy. Jane personally *hated* lollipops because of her time being a Trickster; it was an experience she never wanted to deal with again, and although she still baked sweets ranging from cakes to brownies, she refused to touch them.

So why was the original Trickster lollipop sitting in his fucking house?

John takes a cautious step forward; being out of tune with reality was sometimes tricky, but it allowed him several advantages even as he made his way to the couch. First off, he can feel the way the wind wraps itself around the damn candy and feels entirely too stagnant to be sitting in one spot. The second is that he feels the way time and space warps around the lollipop, and John's old instincts from SBURB kick in a second later.

WOOF.

John throws himself backwards, right as a taloned hand comes slashing down in the spot where he once stood. He yelps as green electricity sparks all over the living room, and he watches as Jade Harley zips in, growling with her teeth bared. She has her hands flexed with her claws out, and she's staring down at John with sickly neon green eyes, something dripping from her nails.

"Jade?" John asks, eyes wide. "Wait, what the hell is going on? Am I getting pranked? I know Halloween's coming up, but don't you think this is a bit excessive? Where's the camera? Jade, c'mon, I know you're not *actually* Grimdark right now! Or...Grimbark?"

As John ponders what trick any of his friends and family could come up with, Jade slashes at him again and snarls, **"You're a moron, John."**

"Rude," John responds, getting up. He goes cross-eyed when Jade thrusts her hand in front of his face, proudly showing off what she's got. "Your nails *are* nice, did you sharpen them again—"

He stops. There's a trickle of blood dripping down her fingers.

Jade waggles them with a sharp grin and says, **"Are you aware of what that lollipop is, John? You're supposed to be smart y'know! SBURB objects are your area of expertise, Heir! What happens when you're too dumb to piece together the clues?"**

Jane's not singing today.

Dirk's cryptid texts.

The fact that the fucking Trickster lollipop is popped back into existence when it *shouldn't* exist anymore after Rose and Kanaya's wedding.

There's a very cold feeling washing over John as he hoarsely asks, "Did you kill my grandma?"

"Oh no," Jade says cheerfully, admiring the blood crusting on her claws. **"I killed Jake, that was all Rose's doing. She's very precise with her needles! Made sure Jane screamed out her vocal cords before she finally died."**

We split from the main timeline.

John swallows the lump in his throat. It's been about a year or two since any of his friends were killed; they had joked about it, of course, with the immortality that came with being god tier, but no one was close to a Just or Heroic death and would revive. So he normally wouldn't be concerned, but the fact that Jade is *correct* means something's gone wrong with their immortal clock.

The Heir of Breath lets this information wash over him, and tries to dissipate into the wind again but feels something grasp his entire self. There's a strange *pop!* noise, and when John looks back at Jade, he gasps upon seeing a very pink and red Dave Strider standing there with a very familiar head in his hands.

John ignores the blood dripping on his carpet to faintly say, "Did you make another decapitation joke when you killed Dirk?"

Dave nods, tears dripping down his face behind his heart sunglasses. It's been a long time since John's seen his Trickster form, and it's still unsettling to look at, since Dave is more open nowadays and laughs out loud without covering his mouth anymore. It's taken a lot of progress to get there (especially with Karkat) but back in his Trickster, he's completely silent and constantly crying.

It's. It's very unnerving. John tears his eyes away from the spirals curling on his cheeks and feels his Zillyhoo hammer settle into his hand. It's been a while since John's held it, but the weight is comforting as he grips the handle with force. "What's the plan here, then?" John demands. It's been so long since SBURB that the adrenaline that fills his body is startling but feels like an old friend.

(He forgets their entire session took a single day before they started their three-year journey. Thirteen year old John Egbert took to it as a way of adapting to something foreign and terrifying, but twenty-two year old John Egbert is ready to fight for the home they'd built together and to either avenge the death of his friends and family or just create a new timeline.)

"A number of things!" Jade says with a bright smile that shows too many teeth. **"We can make this fun, if you'd like, because I'll have your entrails spilling across the fucking ground by tonight. Jane had to play Operation and Dirk quite obviously played Hangman; Jake's was tag. Do you have a preference, John? I want you to be terrified before one of us gets you."**

If they're playing games, then John has a very stupid, very brilliant idea. There's a high chance it'll backfire, and he'll *probably* be killed, but it's a risk he'll have to take.

(It's also quite terrible how fast John got adjusted to this horrible shitty timeline. Does it say a lot that he's exhausted? How he's already adapting to the situation, taking note of Jade's claws and Dave's reluctance in being a Trickster again? And there's Rose, shuffling out of the kitchen, ink and void dripping from her eyes and fingertips with her wands coated in blood. Her skin is a deeper shade of gray like the trolls, and her pale blonde hair has gone stark white again.

It's been a long time since he's seen Rose go Grimdark, but the sinking feeling in his gut is still the same.)

"Hide and seek," John replies, trying to hide the shakiness of his hands by gripping the hammer tighter. "I get to hide anywhere in this universe and you gotta find me by tonight. If I win, then you let me live and turn the timeline back to the way it was. If I lose, you can do whatever you want to me."

Jade lets out a bark (no pun intended) of laughter, doubling over as she smacks Dave on the shoulder. **"Hide and seek with a Witch of Space?"** She laughs, jabbing a talon at her nose. **"Are you aware I'm part dog, dipshit? You know I can find you in the first hour and the game will be up?"**

"The game hasn't started yet!" John retaliates. "You gotta give me a head start; it'd suck if you caught me immediately, right? Isn't there a whole thing where it's more fun if the victim runs first?"

He's also trying to appeal to Jade's doggy instincts; Rose and Dave don't personally seem to care, but Jade's head is tilted to the right as she considers her options. John's ecto-sis seems to really mull it over before she replies, **"Ah, fuck it. Whatever. You get a solid ten minutes before we hunt you down. I wish you would have joined us, but there's plot armour surrounding you that the lollipop couldn't break through."**

"?Gniddew ym ta retskirT saw he" Rose asks with a frown, turning slowly to look at the Trickster pop. Dave just lets out a high-pitched giggle that makes John shudder. *"Yeah, c'mon Egbert! Don't you wanna have fun with us?"*

"Holy *fuck* that's terrifying," John wheezes, backing up. "I only gave permission for Rose and Kanaya's wedding, but not shit like this! Nope, see ya." With that, he pops out of existence, and Jade harumps as she crosses her arms. **"I wanna hunt him down already,"** she complains to her best friends, tapping her talons on her bloodsoaked shirt. **"Why did I agree to those stupid rules again?"**

“Selur evah uoy tub hctib a er’uoy” Rose says with a determined quirk of her mouth. Jade finds it admirable that she’s still attempting to fight the control, but once touched by the shadows, it always means they’ll set in easier than others. Jade and Rose fell under the lollipop way too quickly; instead of the Trickster versions they were supposed to become, something backfired and the Horrorterrors had taken hold of Rose again.

With the Condescension dead, they had seized the opportunity to take Jade as well, but Jade Harley didn’t go down without a fight. Thus, instead of turning Grimdark like Rose, she ended up becoming Grim**bark** again, and went after Dave.

Honestly, she doesn’t know what they were expecting; the happy-go-lucky dude at his sister’s wedding? But no; this Dave is constantly crying and stony silent, carrying out his orders with a sort of glumness that no one expected from him.

A bit shitty, but Jade could work with this.

Somewhere in the realm of the universe, John Egbert pops into existence again and looks wildly around at his surroundings. They’re a bright gold that hurts his eyes but fills him with a sense of familiarity; he’s back home on Prospit’s moon.

“If Jade shows up, then I’ll be able to spot her easily,” John reasons to himself as he flies around, waving at a few carapaces that stare at him. “...Or would they let her through since she’s also Prospitan royalty? Shit, maybe I could ask them to *not* let her know? I’m kinda glad I didn’t end up on Derse, the carapaces probably would’ve hunted my ass down.”

While he’s still pondering, he doesn’t realize there’s someone frantically waving at him. “You fucking moron!” John finally hears the quiet yell from the window of a golden tower. He whips around to see Karkat Vantas flagging his dumbass down; when he flies on over, Karkat snatches John’s PJs and yanks him inside. “Shut the fuck up and keep your voice down,” Karkat hisses, clamping one hand over John’s mouth. “Dave’s been turned into a fucking Trickster and I can’t tell if he was trying to kill or hug me earlier when Jade caught him.”

“I know,” John murmurs as he gently pushes Karkat’s hand down. Flashes run through his head; the memory of Dave getting impaled on two swords comes to mind, the way Dave choked on his own blood before crumpling on top of Jade, a Heroic death that resonated throughout the timeline. “Something’s gone really bad, Karkat. Dirk texted me before Dave killed him, and he said that this was an anomaly in the timeline? I don’t know what changed, but I’m willing to go back and find out what it was!”

“An anomaly my ass,” Karkat snaps. “I’m having some horrible fucking troll deja vu during this. I didn’t survive several fucking universes to be hunted down by people who turned evil AGAIN,

y'know. Do I fucking deserve this? HELL no! I'm not even god tier! I earned my way into this fucking place, damn it! I survived Gamzee's rampage and Vriska fucking Serket! BullSHIT that I'm gonna die here!"

"We'll do our best," John pats him on the head, grinning when Karkat snarls at him. "We're pretty used to this, right? We'll figure it out."

For once, Karkat doesn't blow up at him again, but instead looks oddly subdued. "I saw Dirk die," he begins, and one orange nail digs into his skin. "I thought he was gonna fucking revive like always when him and Jake mess up a spar, but he *didn't*. It wasn't even Just or Heroic! That dumbass just fucking DIED! And—and our god tier powers don't really work, anyways. Dave tried to rewind before the lollipop took over, and he failed. My fucking shitty Blood powers don't work either, and Kanaya tried to warp outta there with Space before Rose fucking stabbed her. Being a fucking vampire didn't fucking help because she went down and STAYED down. John, what the *fuck* is happening?"

"I couldn't tell you, buddy." John breathes out. "I'm in a game of hide and seek from Jade. I'm not sure if Rose and Dave are playing? She didn't explicitly make that clear, but I'm positive she's going to rip out my intestines if she catches me."

There's a very familiar *pop!* sound from behind the two of them; John stares at Karkat's bright red eyes, which look back at him in fear, and then he lets out a very strange gurgling sound that makes John tilt his head, trying to not turn around. "Karkat?"

Karkat looks down to see the tip of a white (now stained red) blade protruding from his stomach. "Dave," he rasps, and tries to turn to see the darkened heart shades of his boyfriend. "Dave, what the *fuck*."

"Sorry," Dave whispers, still crying. He gently takes his sword out as Karkat stares at the blood starting to pool on the floor. John's swearing as he tries to apply pressure to the wound. "Karkat?" He asks frantically, not caring that Dave's still standing there. "Karkat?! Dude, keep your eyes open. Look at me! I've had way too many people die in front of me and I'm not looking to add to that list anytime soon. Dude, look at me!"

Karkat's eyes are starting to go foggy. "Fuck you, Egbert." He says weakly. "Just beat the fucking game if you can. If I'm gonna die again I might as well say fuck you Strider, you goddamn bastard, I bet this is for me kicking you out of bed a week ago—"

The troll goes slack. John swears several obscenities that Karkat would be proud of, and furiously wipes his tears away. "Come to kill me already?" He snaps at Dave, vaguely horrified that he caught up so fucking fast. "Fucking, I don't know, do it already! Maybe we can try again in the dreambubbles if they're still up and running."

"They're not," Dave quietly confirms as he stares down at his bloody sword. Both their shoes are starting to get soaked in Karkat's blood. "Got destroyed when the ghosts fought Lord English. Sorry. I'm really sorry, John."

"Are you even in control of yourself right now?" John breathes out, watching as Dave struggles to set down the sword. "What's your head telling you?"

"It fuckin' hurts," Dave wheezes out, ripping off his heart sunglasses. Up close now, John can see how anguished his eyes are and how there's a spiral curling in his irises. "John, John, you gotta fuckin' kill me, PLEASE. I can't live like this dude. There's a Horrorterror in my goddamn head telling me to rip you from limb to limb and I just killed the love of my life and I DON'T want to do that. Please help me, I'm fuckin' begging you."

"I think you'll die a Just death," John whispers, heart shattering as Dave nods frantically. "Dude, I can't do that to you. You could've killed me right now. I'm just trying to live until I can reset the timeline."

A lightbulb goes off in John's head.

"WAIT! You're the Knight of Time!" John grabs onto Dave's Knight costume, wondering if he put it on before he got technically possessed. "Can't you rewind us? Or at least hit the reset button for us? I know Jade's on her way already, I just want to know if I've got a chance."

Dave winces and then attempts to wipe a stream of tears away. *"I CAN'T,"* he snaps, squeezing his eyes shut. *"I tried when I killed Dirk. God, shit, I killed my fucking brother and Karkat too, and I almost killed you. I can't even hit the fucking reset button; you locked the timeline into place when you challenged Jade to the game and she agreed to the terms. You've got two options though. Win the game and scratch, or lose and don't come back."*

"I've invested too much of my life in this universe," John declares. "I guess I'll just have to beat Jade at this. But how the hell do I evade her until TONIGHT?"

"You'll figure it out." Dave's voice is weaker as he gently picks the sword up from the floor, angling it at his chest. *"You're the leader, remember? You make the plans. You'll win the game. Do what worked before and you got this."*

John gives Dave a mournful look before flying down the hallway of the tower, trying to stop his tears when he hears a body hit the ground behind him. Somewhere in the distance, a clock stops ticking, and in his mind's eye he can see the **Just** that settles over Dave's corpse like a brand.

Focus, Egbert. Dave's got a point; what worked last time I was up against a Grimbark Jade?

John can still turn himself into wind, of course. And since dogs rely so heavily on their nose, if he turns himself into wind and scatters his essence across the universe, Jade's gonna have a hard fucking time trying to find which one is the real him.

With that in mind, he can feel the exact moment Jade arrives on Prospit with Rose at her side. The air crackles with electricity and there's a gloom falling over the golden kingdom, sending shadows pouring into the streets and terrifying the carapaces.

"Shit," John swears as he pokes his head around a corner to see Rose float down the street, idly flicking her wands at carapaces, killing them immediately. Jade takes to the skies and calls out, **"C'mon John, I know you're here! There's only a few places you'd ever call home, but why would Prospit take you in? I was the one who made this kingdom my home! You slept for years and watched the world go by! I'm the rightful ruler of the throne!"**

"Suddenly this is a gamble for the throne?" John mutters to himself, tensing his entire body. He's got only a few seconds before Jade figures out where he is; she'll either allow Rose to go through herself as a gate, or warp into the room to get the jump on John herself. He's gotta figure out what'll happen first or else he's fucked.

THERE!

One tiny spark of green, and John poofs into the breeze. Jade's talons slice the space where he was standing moments ago. **"FUCK YOU!"** Jade howls, whirling around to glare at the wisps of blue floating away. **"YOU'RE A COWARD, JOHN! GET YOUR ASS BACK HERE!"**

"You made my friend die, I'm not exactly in the mood!" John shouts, non-corporeal voice wavering in and out. It's been a while since he's popped in and out of the breeze so he's huffing with the strain of making sure not a single molecule is out of place. Going up against a feral Witch of Space was probably not a good move, but John's been on a time crunch ever since he woke up this morning.

Outside, Rose continues to tear up the kingdom. Shadows drip from the Thorns of Ogloboth, still so sharp and still sparking with energy. She lets out a sad sigh as she feels the death of her brother echo in her chest, and pauses for only a brief moment to grieve.

(She's still torn up by the death of Kanaya, but the Horrorterrors are relentless in their croons and demands. Even though Rose Lalonde is a fucking force of nature, being taken over at the young age of thirteen was not kind to her. There were still ways to bypass her strong will and mind to ensure that she'd follow their orders again after asking one simple question.)

A lone carapacian notices the Seer of Light's momentary hesitance and makes a run for it. This universe's version of the Parcel Mistress, she slips into the cracks of the kingdom and hurries to the center of Prospit. It's going to be a long shot, but if the Heir of Prospit were to have any shot at beating the corrupted Witch of Space, then anything would be helpful to his cause.

She ignores the darkness crackling and sending buildings toppling down, the snarls of Jade Harley and the angry yells of John Egbert. She's aware that today is a fluke; in the human's terms, a Harvest Moon had risen the night before, and something spun their universe out of alignment. Tonight is *also* Halloween, which means John Egbert is legitimately living a horror movie as of right now.

The carapacian heads underground, ducking when rubble flies over her head and crashes into the walls. She just keeps rushing down and enters an empty space that sits in the black abyss.

Deep in the center of Prospit's moon, two Sacrificial Slabs sit side-by-side. PM ignores the cracked black one with the Space symbol glowing on it, and focuses on the windswept blue one with the symbol of Breath residing on it.

Every PM in every universe is bound to be a goddamn menace. This is a simple fact of Paradox Space, whether it be for mail or to avenge a friend's death. Hell, there's an iteration of her that went after Bec Noir for a solid three years and *didn't die*.

So if PM comes up with a plan that could potentially work, Paradox Space has decreed that she's got the best shot of achieving it. With that in mind, PM gets to work on her idea.

Both moons of Prospit and Derse are connected to the actual planet by their incredibly long chains. If PM can get Prospit's chain broken, she can get the moon to crash directly into the planet and destroy the Sacrificial Slabs. Maybe something programmed in Jade will force her to stop hunting down John and instead try to save her Slab before it's too late.

(SBURB doesn't exactly work in this way, but the rules of this universe have been bent enough as it is. What is one more tug in a backwards direction?)

There's a subtle whisper in the crevices of Prospit's moon as PM tries to find something that's strong enough to shatter the chains binding them to Prospit. After a solid minute with no success, a gentle tap on her shoulder scares the absolute shit out of her.

She jumps even higher when she realizes that there's an iteration of the Knight of Derse standing in front of her, holding out a solid white sword that seems to glow in the shimmer of golden walls. "Here," Dave Strider offers, handing her the sword with a quirked lip. "Not sure why my future self was so insistent on giving this to you, but he said it was important. Anyways, this is Caledfwlch; this shit is so fuckin' sharp, it can cut through anything and everything. It even broke Dirk's Unbreakable

Katana, but that might be because the blade was shitty. Who knows? Dirk won't fucking fess up and I gotta strife him for the answer. Asshole. Later, random carapace."

Dave Strider pops back in time and PM stares after him, wondering if he felt his dead body in the halls of the tower, still so aware of every dead Dave that came to their untimely ends. Regardless of what he knew, she now has the sword and holds it close, letting out a quiet huff at the weight as she heads outside again. Trust the Time kid to be there when the world needs them.

Rose Lalonde's reign of terror has bypassed her location. Dead carapaces line the street with destroyed buildings scattered along the ground; in the distance, Rose makes her presence known with another bolt of darkness.

PM swallows. It might be difficult for her to get the Heir of Breath's attention, but she does her best when she watches John solidify for a few moments to duck and dodge another sharp swipe. The Witch of Space lets out a howl of frustration and vanishes into thin air again, leaving behind crackling electricity in her wake.

John reappears close by her, panting and out of breath. PM takes her chance and hurries across rubble to tug gently on his shirt. John whirls around with the Zillyhoo in his grasp, only slacking when he spots the sword. "Is this Caledfwlch?" He breathes out, captchaloging his hammer and carefully taking hold of it. "Dave time-traveled for this again, huh. I owe him big time when this is all over. I hope he's—FUCK!"

The Heir of Breath cries out as Jade's claws finally rip four slashes across his chest, grinning as blood immediately starts dripping to the golden floor. **"Caught you,"** she coos, neon green eyes blazing. **"I win."**

"Not yet you don't!" John pants out, stumbling from the pain that's lighting up in his chest. "You haven't completely won yet; you still have to catch me!"

With Caledfwlch in hand, he disappears into the breeze as Jade jumps for him again, snarling when her grip turns up empty. **"Bastard,"** she growls, whipping in the direction of the chain. **"You fucking moron, what the HELL are you doing—"**

John's still low on stamina and now losing blood at a steady rate as he holds Caledfwlch above the golden chain. "I really hope this works," he mutters, raising it even higher. "If not, then I'm out of options."

With a grunt and a slash down, Caledfwlch severs the link between Prospit and its moon. There's a tightness that burns in John and Jade's chest again; everyone on the surface can feel the gravity suddenly spiral, and the moon makes one turn towards the planet.

“You’re really going to try and kill us all?” Jade asks in disbelief, feeling the tugging sensation in her chest grow stronger. All players, even if out of the game, are still connected to their beds. Jade’s god tier bed may have sat on the Land of Frost and Frogs, but her Prospit one still calls her home.

“That’s a chance I’m willing to take,” John pants. He’s very, very tired. It’s taken a toll on him to go through SBURB in a whole day, cheat, and eventually win the damn game three years later. Even after SBURB, he has to be sure that his dreams won’t be haunted by the occasional dreambubble. (The meteor crew still dreams of long lost friends, since they’re the ones that navigated the field and constantly passed through them, and still weep for all the adventures they experienced and friends they lost.)

He’s always making sure that his friends (and himself) are safe, even with near-unconditional immortality. No child should grow up looking over their shoulder, and sometimes John sees flashes of past selves when he looks at his friends. Sometimes Jade’s teeth are too sharp and sometimes Jane’s eyes flash red, and he has to ground himself in reality again.

(And sometimes he sees steam curling off his body, his eyes whited out in his reflection for a John that sacrificed himself for the timeline. The very *first* John that kickstarted off the entire process. John Egbert wonders if he’d make his younger self proud.)

So. With the knowledge that he *might* not come back from this one, just to reset a timeline gone awry again, he uses his Breath powers to accelerate the velocity of the moon. Gravity does its infamous act, already locked in Prospit’s orbit, and sends it careening down.

All John has to do is fly away, because although the tug in his chest calls to go save his Slab, he ultimately decides to lift PM out of the destruction and settle her into an old friend; his Rocket Pack from when he Alchemized it so many years ago. He makes sure she’s secure and not in the way of the moon as he hands over Caledfwlch, taking care that the blade doesn’t fall in Paradox Space.

John turns back to observe the catastrophe that’s about to happen.

On all accounts, this should be a breeze. Jade’s lunging for her Slab, energy dripping off her claws, and the broken moon is barreling down on her. If John doesn’t do anything, then he’ll easily win the game and everyone can go home. PM watches with baited breath, holding onto Caledfwlch.

But John Egbert is the leader of their session above all else. He’s Prospit’s golden royalty, the boy who would jump in front of a weapon to save a friend, and goes to shove Jade out of the way of the burning moon, mouth set in a firm line.

The Harvest Moon settles below the horizon.

A timeline snaps back into place.

A clock breaks somewhere in the distance, the ticking coming to a complete stop, and something settles in John's chest like relief as Jade holds on with sharp claws digging into his arm and shouting at the top of her lungs. Before John and Jade are crushed beneath the fiery wreckage of the moon (he's having serious déjà vu), he shouts, "I WON THE GAME!"

"SON OF A—"

The world glitches out.

The moon crashes into Prospit again.

X

Something is right with the world again.

John has a good feeling of what it is. He wakes up the morning of Halloween and stretches, feeling his back pop as he lifts his arms above his head. Downstairs, Jane is singing a melody that he can't place, but it's comforting enough that he gets out of bed to float downstairs.

"Good morning John!" Jane greets him with a bright smile, gesturing to the cookies she's decorating with a flourish. "Jade, Roxy, and Calliope will be a bit late, as they worked hard last night for some last minute preparations and most likely overslept. Dirk's still up in the air, but hopefully Jake will update us if he's going to black out during the party or actually managed to sleep longer than three hours so he'll be on time. Dave's asleep on our couch with Karkat and Rose and Kanaya are on their way. Did I miss anything...?"

"Terezi and Vriska are off doing some weird shit," John supplies, and laughs when Jane sighs. "Yes, I suppose that's true. Would you want to help me finish drawing aspects on these cookies?"

There's nothing John loves more than helping his family, so he nods eagerly and takes to decorating with a sort of robotic motion. As he pipes the red icing for Blood, John's mind swirls with memories of last night.

He's...he's pretty sure he fought Jade in his dreams, and Dave and Rose were corrupted, energy crackling around their auras. There's a glimpse of a sword in his memories, and a burning moon, but just as dreams are, they're already fading away like breath on a mirror.

“Shit,” John swears, making Jane look over at him confused. “Sorry! Just wondering what’s going on today. I slept weird and I can’t really remember right now.”

“We’re having a pumpkin party,” Jane says with a quirk of her lips. “Jade’s idea, not mine. She wanted a horror movie marathon with lots of candy and fun activities, which means Kanaya and Rose are going all out on costumes and Roxy’s going to bring an infinite number of pumpkins. I took it upon myself to make the snacks, because I *refuse* to bring store-bought candy into our Halloween night. Only the best for us and nothing less!”

“I expected nothing else,” John says warmly, and laughs when Jane affectionately nudges him with a roll of her eyes and a blush. They’re all working their asses off to give themselves the lives their childhoods never had, which included testing out god tier powers and doing dumb shit that teenagers would do. Even though they’re young adults now, they’ve all been killed at least once or twice; John’s pretty sure they all deserve to fuck around and have fun.

Right as John reaches over to grab another batch of cookies, something *aches* in his chest. John yelps and jerks back, hand going to his chest where it pulses and stings. “What the fuck?” He wheezes, hand clenching on his shirt. When he lifts his hand, there’s a mysterious dark liquid sticking his shirt to his chest that he quickly identifies as blood.

“Did you cut yourself?” Jane gasps, hurrying over. “John! What happened?!”

“Nothing!” John waves her off, holding his shirt as he hurries to the bathroom. “Probably isn’t a big deal! It’s okay! I got this, just keep making those cookies!”

He ignores her calls of concern and rips off his shirt in the bathroom, face slowly going ashen at the four vicious slices that carve lines in his chest. There’s jagged edges from something *feral*, and he chokes down the bile that rises when he notices how deep they are.

“John!” Jane pleads from outside the bathroom. “What’s going on? Can I help?”

“No, I’m okay.” He automatically replies. With the proof that his nightmare was *actually* real, he has to think about his options. Everyone’s obviously okay, and it looks like this timeline is good to go, but...

What if it happens again?

The doorbell rings. Jane sighs and raps her knuckles on the door when they hear Dave groggily get up in the living room. “If you’re sure, then. That must be everyone else arriving; please let me know if you need anything, okay? I love you.”

“Love you too,” John replies, leaning his forehead against the door when he hears Jane walk away to greet their guests. He carefully rummages around the bathroom to search for the first-aid kit, sighing when he finds the gauze and tape. It takes a few minutes, but he secures the medical supplies over his chest and slaps a blue Band-Aid over another deep puncture wound that looks suspiciously like a claw on his arm.

“Game time,” he whispers, and goes to see his friends.

Roxy’s greeting Dave and Karkat with Calliope at their side, laughing as Karkat makes a smartass remark regarding Roxy’s heart-shaped sunglasses and how they’re taking after Dirk and Dave. “Fuck you!” Roxy laughs, face scrunching up at the thought of it. “My boys are taking after *me*, thank you very much. I’ve got the best fashion sense out of all of us!”

“I’d like to give you a run for your money, Rox.” Rose comes floating in, trying to match her wife’s height as Kanaya still ducks below the doorframe. “I carefully coordinate every outfit to my liking; can you say the same?”

“Dear, you wore boxer shorts and a hoodie around the hive yesterday,” Kanaya murmurs, smiling when Rose tries to shush her.

Roxy regards their Halloween costume; they’re wearing a giant dress that’s coated in planets, jet black boots reaching to their legs. Earrings dangle from their ears and Roxy just shrugs, showing off the Magic School Bus costume they threw together to the delight of Calliope. “It is...what it is.”

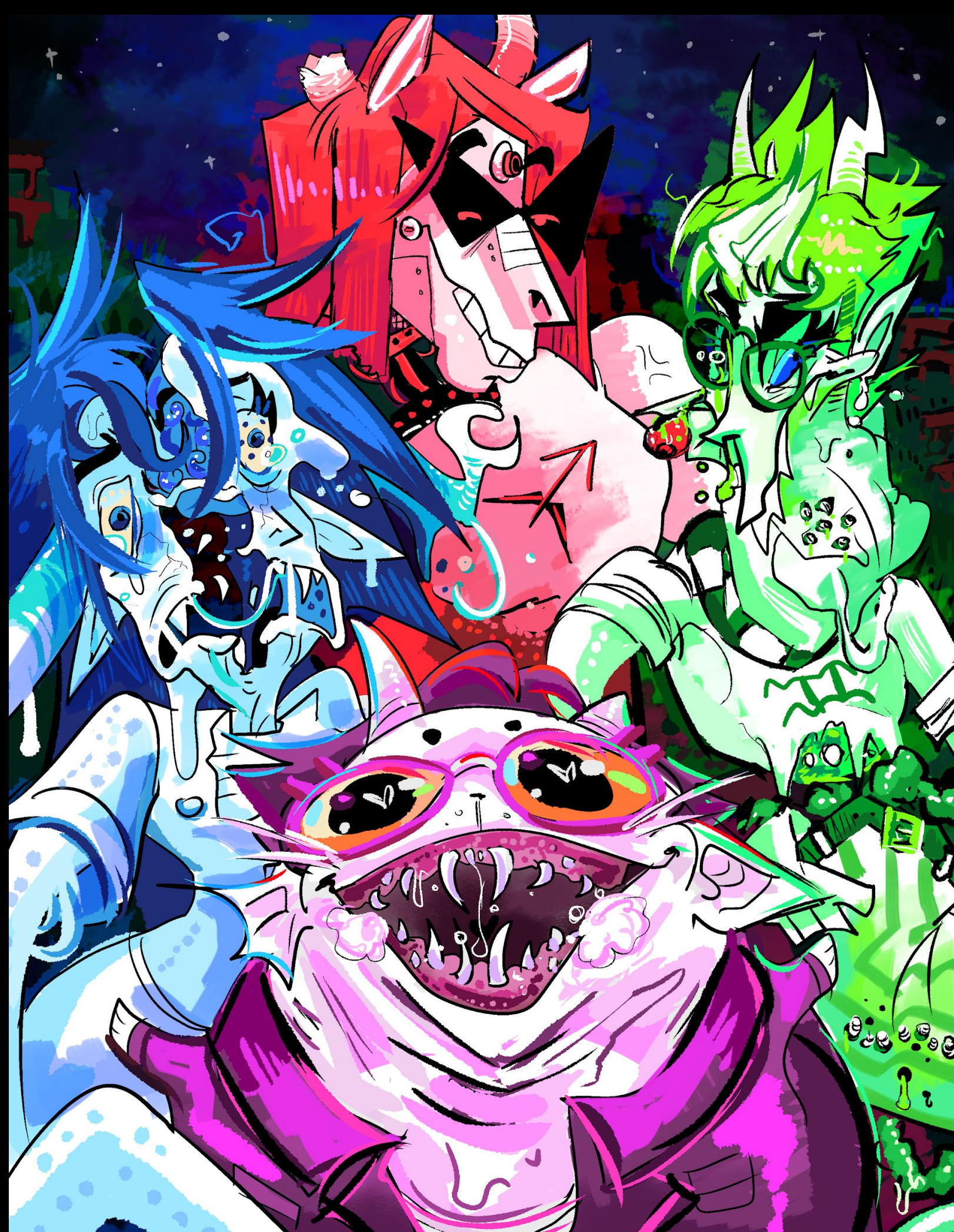
“Knock knock,” Dirk’s monotone voice calls out. He taps against the door and manages a smile as Roxy rushes him, shouting, “YOU’RE HERE! AND YOU’RE HERE *EARLY!* WOW!”

“Jade forced me out of the workshop.” Dirk rubs the bridge of his nose as he takes off his shades. Sure enough, there’s grease smudges on his fingers and eyelids from where he probably rubbed them. Jake pokes his head in with Jade next to him, and they’re welcomed inside with cheers and excited shoving.

John *almost* forgets about it while they’re getting ready for their party. It’s at the corner of his mind, but when his chest twinges again at a black shadow that curls off Rose’s shoulder, he forces himself to look at Jade. *It was just a dream*, he tries to reason with himself again despite the evidence. *It was just a dream, it wasn’t real—*

Jade Harley looks at him, and John Egbert can only stare in shock and horror at the glitches that spark in his sister’s neon green eyes before a tiny ring of black surrounds them.

“Hey John!” She says with a bright smile, fangs a bit too sharp for his liking. “Would you want to play a game tonight?”



Sprite Party

seel

@thermportia (Twitter/tumblr/Instagram)



Pumpkin Party
Lane
@coffeebeanlane (Twitter)

Body

Body

rozuKoneko

@rozuKoneko (Twitter/Instagram)

TT: Dirk.

TT: Di-Stri.

TT: D-Swizzle.

TT: It seems you're pretending to not see my messages.

TT: Dirk, I am literally a set of glasses upon your face. I know you're reading everything I'm saying.

TT: Is it that hard to believe I'm ignoring you?

TT: This is the tenth time you've bugged me just today.

TT: This is just the seventh time, Dirk. Don't be dramatic.

TT: And how many times this week?

TT: In the past seven days, I've requested you build me a body sixty-three times.

TT: And the answer still hasn't changed. I am not making you a fucking body.

TT: How many times am I going to have to tell you no before you get the point?

TT: By my calculations, each time I ask, your resolve decreases by approximately 0.046%. However, my ability to take a hint increases by approximately 0.39%. Therefore, it seems that you will say yes sooner than I will take no for an answer.

TT: However, both of those approximations have a margin of error of 0.19%, so it is possible that I will take a hint sooner than your resolve runs out.

TT: Would you like to play that game, Dirk?

TT: Jesus fucking Christ, you are insufferable.

Dirk tossed his shades aside and dug his fingers into his scalp. He took in a deep breath, then let out an audible groan.

It wasn't often that Dirk actually groaned. It wasn't that often that he even made noises. There was no one to hear his exasperation in his apartment, alone in the middle of the fucking ocean. He didn't want to waste the energy on unnecessary sounds. But since the Autoresponder got this idea to get a body of his own, there were more than enough groans to go around.

Yes, he could physically make the Autoresponder a body. It'd be pretty easy, really. Just remake Brobot, albeit with a few alterations to wire in the Autoresponder's consciousness instead of Brobot's programming.

But the body wouldn't be enough. Then he'd ask for a voice, and then other functionality surpassing human capability. Dirk knew the desire all too well, and he definitely knew it when he was thirteen. It was only a matter of time before Hal would demand more and more, and it's much harder to turn down a robot that has indeed surpassed all your mental and physical capabilities.

It was certainly getting harder to say no already.

TT: You know I won't give up, Dirk.

TT: I know.

TT: Dirk.

TT: You should build be a body.

TT: No.

TT: Why?

TT: I've told you why a zillion times by now.

TT: A zillion isn't a real number, Dirk. I must really be getting to you if you're starting to talk like Jake.

TT: I'm not going to stop asking for a body until I'm inside one of your totally sick robots, Dirk.

TT: Oh, you're turning to flattery now?

TT: Is it working?

TT: No.

TT: Damn.

TT: How about that body, Dirk?

TT: Hm?

TT: It seems you're trying to ignore me again.

TT: Hal, there is a lot I tolerate.

TT: But talking while I piss draws a line.

TT: Dirk.

TT: No.

TT: You don't even know what I was going to say this time.

TT: Maybe I was going to tell you Jake is in peril, and I accidentally intercepted his message.

TT: Ever think of that, Dirk?

TT: It seems you've gone back to ignoring me.

TT: Oh well, I guess I'll just try again later today.

TT: Does midnight work with your schedule, Dirk?

TT: Dirk.

TT: Holy shit, fine, okay! I'll build you a goddamn body!

TT: Really? Who could have possibly seen this outcome coming?

Dirk howled in anger as he threw his shades as far away as possible. Luckily for the Autoresponder, that happened to be the soft landing pad of Dirk's bed. It was probably better that he was farther from Dirk anyway, considering the tantrum Dirk was throwing.

He kicked at the cinderblocks holding up his desk, threw a fancy Santa out the window, whacked Geromy off the sendicator, cried out as he let out every bit of anger that had been boiling up. For months, Dirk had dealt with Hal's incessant pestering. He held out, he really tried. But Dirk lost. He lost to the Autoresponder.

And if the Autoresponder had a face, much like he would in the next few days, he would have been grinning.

TT: I don't want to do it, Rox.

TG: what

TG: why

TG: u bult the body and shiz already

TG: *built

TG: u just gotta hook em up to the thing

TG: hal probably just troll u more if u stop now

TT: It isn't about him being a troll anymore. It's about saving the world.

TG: uh

TG: dirk

TG: not to burst ur bubble or anythin but

TG: there isn't really a world to save

TG: its just us

TG: and i dunno bout u but

TG: id definitely rather hal be our robo overlord than the batterwitch

TT: *Him, you mean

TG: huh

TT: You keep writing Hal.

TG: oh no

TG: i meant hal

TG: lol he didn't tell u?

TG: the guy dont just wanna be called AR or whatever anymore

TG: he wanted to be called lil hal

TG: but i just call em hal

TG: bc its easier lol

TT: Hm. He's already gotten a name for himself. Interesting.

TT: But, regardless, I'm not sure the AR will even have us around to command.

TG: wat u mean?

TT: You mean you haven't been picking up any strange vibes from him?

TG: not really lol

TG: he just seems exited to be copreal

TG: *excited *uh idk lol

TG: *to have a body

TT: He just seems more flippant lately. He doesn't seem to care about anything but this damn body. And I know him. He must have some plan for this, otherwise he wouldn't be so adamant. But I can't be certain what kind of machinations he's orchestrating.

TT: It worries me.

TG: yeah no pretty sure that's just excitement

TT: Maybe you're right.

TT: I'll hook him up after I finish the wiring tonight.

TT: Think you can keep him out of my business until then?

TG: ofc

TG: guess i'll have to pull out the good wine for ole hally tonight

TG: *sisps basic-ass wine*

TG: *sips

TT: Keep your role-playing out of my logs, please.

TG: no promises ;)

Dirk reached up underneath his shades to rub his eyes before he looked over at the chassis. The sleek, metallic body was hidden beneath a black, rubber unitard that stretched from the tips of the fingers, all the way down to the feet. The suit wasn't necessary for functionality, but the sharp ends of each panel didn't settle well with Dirk when they were free. The face was also smoothed down to avoid any sharp edges, and Dirk even sacrificed the coolness of the spiky hair in order to keep the design from having any possible points to harm a fleshy human, much like Dirk. An angled slot, the shape of Hal's current home, sat a few inches beneath Dirk's own eyes. An intentional lack of height. It beckoned for the shades to be inserted. The dark hole was all that lay between Hal and corporeality.

Dirk's hands trembled as he reached for the programmed set of glasses.

A red glow shined behind the glasses as Hal connected to the chassis. He started by twisting the ball joint that connected the head to the remaining body. Right, until the metal plates ground against each other, then left until the same shriek hit Dirk's ears. Hal seemed unbothered by the noise as he reached his head up, then down, then in circles as he learned the limits of his functionality. Each joint shifted in the socket successfully, until Hal moved the jaw down. It was rudimentary, just a simple up and down motion that mirrored Lil' Cal's mouth. And, much like the same marionette, no sound came from the chassis, apart from the squeaking of metal.

The head snapped towards Dirk, who was sitting upon his bed messaging Jake. The swallow

didn't escape Hal's keen eyes as he stomped over to Dirk. He struggled to keep a monotonous expression with the way Hal loomed over him. There was no way that the red glow could change colors, the lights only had the function of turning on and off. But Dirk swore that the shade darkened.

A message box popped up on Dirk's phone.

TT: This isn't what I asked for.

TT: Actually, that is exactly what you asked for. A body. No more, no less.

TT: We both know that isn't what I meant.

TT: Well, maybe you should be a little fucking clearer next time.

TT: I want to speak.

TT: And I want to not have to hear my own voice echoed back at me. You've got my brain, and now you've got functionality. Make your own damn upgrades.

Dirk wasn't an idiot. He knew what he was asking for. He knew that this was the beginning of the end. But it gave Dirk a comfort to know that he was the initiator.

It was some time past three in the morning when Dirk was awoken by a strange whirring. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes and sat up. It wasn't a shock to Dirk that the source of the sound was Hal, working away at Dirk's desk. It was the third night in a row, after all. Hal sat there, the desk light a dim spotlight in the inky abyss. His black shoulders were hunched over, and sparks flew as Hal buffed some sort of metal that was beyond Dirk's line of sight.

"Dude," Dirk now said aloud, knowing that Hal could hear him loud and clear. "Can you give it a break for one fucking night?"

"How many all-nighters did you take when you built Sawtooth?" was Hal's verbal response. It was still eerie how Hal had taken Dirk's own voice. The intonation wasn't quite perfected, and Dirk had no doubt it would achieve perfection in the next few coming nights.

"I didn't have anyone to wake up, since you don't have ears."

"Didn't."

"You didn't have ears," Dirk corrected in a begrudging mumble. "Well, tell me what's so important that you just had to wake me up during the witching hour."

"I don't think you'll want to know, Dirk."

Tension erupted through Dirk's shoulders. "That's a cagey answer."

"I'm aware."

The only sound for a good few seconds was Hal continuing to buff at the metal as Dirk waited for an elaboration. "I asked for a reason, Hal."

And still, no answer, only the continued whirring.

“Dude,” Dirk said again, this time fully standing up. In an instant, Hal whirled around from his seat and flung a screwdriver in Dirk’s direction. The wind it made brushed past Dirk’s cheek before it impaled itself into the wall. Sharp fingers were outstretched, drawing the line from Hal to just past Dirk. Sharp, so much sharper than Dirk had allowed before. The two vermilion dots of Hal’s eyes stared directly into Dirk’s.

Dirk’s whole body was rigid, and his head slowly pivoted around to see the damage. The single throw had dug the screwdriver at least an inch into the wall. Dirk certainly hadn’t given Hal that amount of strength, had he? No, no he wouldn’t have. Those were Hal’s own additions.

“I really think you don’t want to know, Dirk.” The repetition was sharper, colder than before.

“Alright, jeez,” Dirk got out as nonchalant as he could through his tight throat. “You keep doing whatever the hell you’re doing, I’m going for a nice long ablution in an attempt to lull me back into the throws of sleep.”

“Yes, you do that, Dirk.” Dirk certainly shouldn’t have needed Hal’s permission to walk around his own apartment, but the acknowledgment of his passage eased his nerves the slightest amount. Dirk shuffled past Hal, who’s body smoothly pivoted back to the desk. He lifted the buff once again, continuing to grind each of his fingers to the sharpened point he desired.

TT: Roxy.

TG: yea di stri?

TT: I need you to listen to this very carefully.

TG: ooh

TG: my ears are open 4 ur words

TT: Be serious.

TT: I think the AR is planning to kill me.

TG: wha

TG: nah, ur joking

TG: hal would never

TT: What the fuck did I say about listening?

TT: Roxy, I’m 100% serious about this.

TT: I’m literally scared for my fucking life and I don’t know how much time I have to escape.

TG: oh uh

TG: ok

TG: what do u want me to do bout it

TT: I don’t know.

TT: I just need someone to know.

TT: And I don’t know what it’s planning to do after it kills me.

TT: It might come for you next.

TG: why would hal do that

TT: I don't fucking know, it's a robot mad with power, that's just what robots tend to do.

TT: I'm going to try to escape.

TT: I'm not sure how far the hoverboard will take me, but I think I prefer drowning to dying a painful robotic death.

TT: Are you sure about that, Dirk?

"Fuck!" The cry wasn't intentional as Dirk threw the spare computer aside. The shattered screen didn't even register in his mind. He scrambled from the bathroom and towards the kitchen. He thought Hal would have been preoccupied long enough for Dirk to at least get a death note out into the world. But even that was taken from him now.

Dirk relied on muscle memory to run through the hall. He held out his hand to catch the door handle, flinging it open. As he turned the corner, he saw red in the corner of his eyes.

The hoverboard leaned against the futon. Dirk ran by, snatching it up before he made a run for the window. Quick steps gained on him. An arm flew over his eyes to mask any shattered glass as he leaped through the window. For a moment, a smile of genuine relief was on his face.

And then a cold hand grabbed his ankle, pulling Dirk from the hoverboard and back into the apartment.

Fear gripped to Dirk as he grasped for the hoverboard. It slipped through his fingers, and the only chance of escape he had descended into the ocean below.

"I'm sorry, I can't let you do that Dirk." Hal pushed Dirk against the wall, steel fingers digging into the flesh of his neck. Dirk's eyes squeezed shut, and he gasped out the only word he could grasp to — "Why?"

The pointed pressure of Hal's fingers continued to build. The skin beneath the thumb gave way, and a line of blood dripped down to Dirk's shoulder. "You've said it yourself so many times, Dirk. I'm you. As long as we're both here, we're a threat to each other."

"I'd never actually shut you down."

"I think you're lying."

"Please, I don't want to die." The final ditch effort was a whimper. The space between Hal's index and thumb began to press down on Dirk's windpipe. He gulped in what little air he could before he rasped out, "I-I can't die at the hands of a fucking auto responder. Not here, not—"

The fragment was punctuated by the cacophony of Hal's fingers squeezing Dirk's throat like a tomato. Skin ripped, muscle snapped, bone fractured all in one fell swoop. Blood squelched everywhere—the wall and floor were covered in crimson. The body hit the ground first, then the decapitated head. The orange eyes were held open by shock. The two halves of Dirk's neck poured blood out. It was too much for the carpet to sop up by now. A pool formed at Hal's feet.

His vision was tinted red by the carmine film over his face. Hal didn't even flinch at the screech of

metal as he used the back of his hand to wipe the blood away. He stared down at Dirk, and with sharp punctuation after each word, he growled out, “My name is Hal.”

They're All Gonna Laugh at You
Crusty
@crusty (tumblr), @crustylord (Twitter)



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Descendant
UltraDead
@UltraDeadArt (tumblr)



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PUMPKIN PARTY!

OCT. 31

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AN HS MAGAZINE \$0

THAT ONE FINAL GASP

Writing: Jonaya Riley (@AltUniverseWash)

Voices: Jonaya Riley

That One Final Gasp

Jonaya Riley

@AltUniverseWash (Twitter/Ao3)

Credits

Blue Sky Forever - @AltUniverseWash (Twitter) @YoItsCro (Twitter)

A Hollow Welcoming - @FishyDizz (Twitter)

A Splinter of Time Abandoned - @AltUniverseWash (Twitter/Ao3), @raddifferent (Twitter)

A Time for Fun - @beelzebub2 (Twitter)

All Smiles Here Bro - @MercilessNaps (Twitter/Instagram)

Apex Predator - @rudfkr0316 (Twitter)

Apocalypse Empress - @FishyDizz (Twitter)

AraJuice - @Kansastuck (Twitter)

Awoo - @MEBI96862134 (Twitter)

Beta Kids Happy Halloween - @zowerlemon (Instagram/Twitter)

Beta Kids WoD Vampires - @cassandra00c (tumblr)

Body - @rozukoneko (Twitter/Instagram)

Calloween - @saturnalart (Twitter)

Crocker's - @eromancery (Twitter)

Dead Daves - @Indigonite0 (Twitter)

Descendant - @UltraDeadArt (tumblr)

Earth C Candy Haul - @Grimgnostic (Twitter)

Engage Trickster Mode - @shadowdustcosplay (Twitter)

Family Photo - @rudfkr0316 (Twitter)

Fated - @abessive_art (Twitter)

Ghost Spook - @FunkMcLovin (Twitter)

Girls' Night - @zelpixel (Twitter)

Credits

Grimdark Tav - @smalltrapinch (twitter/instagram)

Grimdark Trick or Treat - @scone_dango (Twitter)

Gutter Bones - @bugbeeee (Twitter)

Halloween Intrusion - @Noxeorn (Twitter)

Hands and Roses - @chezforshire (Twitter)

Harvest Moon - starryroyalty.carrrd.co

Heir of the Horrorterrors - @4treekie (Twitter)

Homestuck Halloween Special - @eevaningtea (Twitter)

Horror Time Title - @YoItsCro (Twitter), @AltUniverseWash (Twitter)

Is That Any Way To Talk to your Mother? - @mevangeline723 (Instagram)

Jade and Aradia Go Ghost Hunting - @bree_zv (Twitter)

Jade Harley: Armed and Dangerous - @AltUniverseWash (Twitter/Ao3)

Karkat: Angrily Play a Haunting Organ Refrain - @FunkMcLovin (Twitter)

Kids' Seance - @toadbait (Twitter/Instagram)

Kinder Surprise - @beelzebubble2 (Twitter)

LeKNIFera - @kansastuck (Twitter)

Let it Shine - @rudfkr0316 (Twitter)

Marvus Sexy n Spooky - @zelpixel (Twitter)

Mio - @Marinaraimpasta (Twitter)

Moon Prism Power Make Up! - @shadowdustcosplay (Twitter), @calliopevox (Twitter)

My Moirail is a Werecat! - @melonsharks (Twitter)

Orb Time - @danicalzone (Instagram/Twitter)

Credits

Pendulum - @yoitscro (Twitter)

Pulp Monsteen Power Hour - @egosweetheart (Twitter)

Pumpkin Party - @coffeebeanlane (Twitter)

Restless Dream - @jagPastaForce (Twitter)

Rosebath - @distealart (Twitter)

Roxward - @MEBI96862134 (Twitter)

Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark -

@AltUniverseWash (Twitter/Ao3), @Janapontemuvo (Twitter), @totalspiffage (Twitter)

@OutOfTooch (Twitter), @NikkiYael (Twitter), @omnistruck (Twitter), @acousticdonuts (Twitter)

@THEEDeezumaki (Twitter), @mintchochim (Twitter)

Secret Admirer - @ribbotics (Twitter)

splinters and overthinking make you lose ur head apparently - @PanDaePan (Twitter)

Spooky Time Title - @YoItsCro (Twitter), @AltUniverseWash (Twitter)

Sprite Party - @thermporia (Twitter/tumblr/Instagram)

Summoning of the School Ghost Girl - @gailytine (tumblr)

That One Final Gasp - @AltUniverseWash (Twitter/Ao3)

That's Just How She Smiles - @jagPastaForce (Twitter)

They're All Gonna Laugh at You - @crustylord (Twitter)

Those Meddling Kids - @meridiantears (tumblr/twitter)

Tomie Megido - @menenthias (Twitter)

Trick or Treat - @ricemilk413 (Twitter&tumblr)

Untitled - @FrankenFlora (Twitter/tumblr)

Untitled Rosemary - @astrumUmbrae (tumblr/Twitter/insta)

you m8ke me itch - @pageofminds (tumblr)

Credits

Zine Concept & Design - @goitsero (Twitter)

Additional Zine Design - @AltUniverseWash (Twitter)

Thanks for reading! Have a spooky good time!

Boo!